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**THE STORY OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT'S FIRST LOVE**

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SIR WALTER SCOTT.

"Alas! his fine Scottish face, with its shaggy honesty and goodness, when we saw it latterly in the Edinburgh streets, was all worn with care—the joy all fled from it, and ploughed deep with labour and sorrow."—THOMAS CARLYLE.

THE STORY OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT'S  
FIRST LOVE

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES FROM HIS  
LIFE AND WORKS  
AND  
PORTRAITS OF SIR WALTER AND LADY SCOTT  
AND OF SIR WILLIAM AND LADY FORBES

BY  
ADAM SCOTT

EDINBURGH:  
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1896

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## PREFACE

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THIS little work, or compilation, as perhaps it should more properly be called, was suggested by some references to the "Story," in the *History of Selkirkshire*, written by T. Craig-Brown, Esq. Originally intended for a magazine, it outgrew the limits permissible for such publications ; hence its appearance in the present form.

The thanks of the author are due to Messrs. Macmillan for their kind permission to reproduce the interesting portraits of Sir William and Lady Forbes, portraits taken from family miniatures, and that appeared in the *Memoirs of Principal Forbes*, published in 1873, and now out of print.





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They err who tell us Love can die ;  
With life all other passions fly,  
All others are but vanity.  
In Heaven Ambition cannot dwell,  
Nor Avarice in the vault of Hell :  
Earthly these passions of the Earth ;  
They perish where they have their birth,  
But Love is indestructible ;  
Its holy flame for ever burneth,  
From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth ;  
Too oft on Earth a troubled guest,  
At times deceived, at times oppressed,  
It here is tried and purified.  
Then hath in Heaven its perfect rest :  
It soweth here with toil and care,  
But the harvest time of Love is there.

R.M. SOUTHEY.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment ;  
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

*David baran Markov  
1 College Row, Calcutta*

THE STORY  
OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT'S FIRST LOVE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth." *4R*

"THE celebrated passage which we have prefixed to this chapter has, like most observations of the same author, its foundation in real experience. The period at which love is formed for the first time, and felt most strongly, is seldom that at which there is much prospect of its being brought to a happy issue. The state of artificial society opposes many complicated obstructions to early marriages; and the

chance is very great that such obstacles prove insurmountable. In fine, there are few men who do not look back in secret to some period of their youth at which a sincere and early affection was repulsed or betrayed, or became abortive from opposing circumstances. It is these little passages of secret history which leave a tinge of romance in every bosom, scarce permitting us, even in the most busy or the most advanced period of life, to listen with total indifference to a tale of true love."

The foregoing lines from his romance of *Peperil of the Peak* seem a fitting introduction to the story of Sir Walter Scott's first love. It was the echo of his own experience, the revelation of which, in a fragmentary form, is to be found scattered over various books, but which is now, in these pages, related for the first time, so far as possible, as a connected history, with illustrations and side-lights drawn as much as they can be from the very words of the great writer and his contemporaries.

Happy love is apt to show itself in open rejoicing. The heart brimming over with blissful emotion, and not a little proud of its triumph, must speak out, not unseldom too exuberantly for the patience of the ordinary listener, who may be pardoned for sometimes wishing that the marriage state may be quickly

arrived at, so that its prosaic realities may put an end to confidences which, however interesting to the principal parties concerned, are wont to become somewhat wearisome to others by their oft repetition. But very different is the case when the pure, supreme, and permanent love of a highly sensitive nature meets with unrequital or disappointment. The instinct natural to the animal wounded nigh unto death leads it to seek the deepest seclusion. And so the stricken heart would fain hide its grief from all the world. It shrinks from friends, the nearest and dearest, for even their sympathy is hard to be borne.<sup>1</sup> The bitterness of the past is revived, and self-respect or self-vanity, whichever one may call it, is stung to the quick, for nothing perhaps is more intensely painful and mortifying to the heart whose trouble is too deep and too sacred for utterance than the knowledge that its misfortune should be the common subject of discussion and comment by others.

If Scott's own desire could have been complied with, the episode, so painful to him, of his first love

<sup>1</sup> "I am glad Lockhart and his wife are gone. Why? I cannot tell, but I am pleased to be left to my own regrets without being melted by condolences, though of the most sincere and affectionate kind."—*Scott's Diary—after the death of his wife.*

would have been eliminated from his biography ; but, in the face of the intense interest that the public takes in any romantic incidents affecting their great men and favourites, he knew that this was impossible. The story in its broad outlines was known to too many, and untrue versions of it, as actually happened, were sure to be disseminated as soon as he was dead.<sup>1</sup> Very pathetic in reference to this natural wish for concealment is the following entry in his Diary, made at one of those times when the memory of the past surged up again through the thirty years that had passed since his fond hopes had been irretrievably shattered :—

“This is sad work. The very grave gives up its dead, and time rolls back thirty years to add to my perplexities. . . . Yet, what a romance to tell ! and

<sup>1</sup> “I foresee that some readers may be apt to accuse me of trenching upon delicacy in certain details of the sixth and seventh chapters in this volume. Though the circumstances there treated of had no trivial influence on Sir Walter's history and character, I should have been inclined, for many reasons, to omit them ; but the choice was, in fact, not left to me—for they had been mentioned and misrepresented in various preceding sketches of the Life which I had undertaken to illustrate. Such being the case, I considered it as my duty to tell the story truly and intelligibly, but I trust I have avoided unnecessary disclosures ; and, after all, there was nothing to disclose that could have attached blame to any of the parties concerned.”—*Lockhart, in preface to Life of Scott.*

told it will some day be. And then my three years' dreaming and my two years of wakening will be chronicled, doubtless. But the dead will feel no pain."

His anticipation has been verified. The tale has been told, and its narration has only served to deepen the love and sympathy of all true hearts for the author, who, perhaps of all writers, drew unto himself to the greatest degree the affectionate esteem and admiration of his friends and contemporaries, and whose character as a man has most endeared him to those acquainted with his life and works.

Sir Walter speaks about his three years of dreaming, but there is little doubt that, from the very beginning to the end, his romantic attachment extended over a period of seven years. In another place, he himself, by inference, shows that it was at the early age of eighteen, an age when the passions are at their dawn, that the seedlings of his first love were implanted in his breast. It was at this age, too, that his young acquaintances began to notice that Scott, whose carelessness as regards dress had often furnished them with matter for jocular remark, began to pay some attention to his personal appearance; and, judging from sundry allusions in letters written to



him by his intimates, it was about this time that indications appeared, which, in the light cast upon them by future revelations, we now know must have referred to the birth of a sentiment that lasted so long and ended so disastrously.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LADY OF THE GREEN MANTLE

WRITING to a friend, Scott appears to have recorded the impressions made upon his susceptible nature by an encounter with a young lady wearing a green mantle, and whose intentional or accidental lowering of the hood of that garment, and thus enabling him, for the first time, to look upon her face, was commented upon, with apparently a warm description of the charming features thus revealed to his admiring gaze. This interesting topic formed the subject of other letters between the friends; but the part made public is that in which his friend remarks as follows: "Your Quixotism, dear Walter, was highly characteristic. From the description of the blooming fair, as she appeared when she lowered her *manteau vert*, I am hopeful you have not dropped her acquaintance." "This hint," says Lockhart, "I cannot help connecting with the first scene of the

Lady Green Mantle in *Redgauntlet*, but indeed I could easily trace many more coincidences between these letters and that novel.<sup>1</sup> . . . His friends, I have heard more than one of them say, used often to rally him on the coldness of his nature. By degrees they discovered that he had, from almost the dawn of the passions, cherished a secret attachment, which continued through all the most perilous stage of life to act as a romantic safeguard of virtue. This (however he may have disguised the story by mixing it up with the Quixotic adventures of the damsel in the Green Mantle)—this was the early and innocent affection to which we owe the tenderest pages, not only of *Redgauntlet*, but of *The Lady of the Lake* and *Rokeby*. In all these works the heroine

<sup>1</sup> Scott's numerous letters to this friend are said to have been accidentally destroyed by a fire. He is probably the gentleman thus mentioned in the Diary, under the date of the 4th March 1828: "Dined at the Lord Chief Commissioner's, where I met, the first time for thirty years, my old friend and boon companion, with whom I shared the wars of Bacchus, Venus, and sometimes of Mars. The past rushed on me like a flood, and almost brought tears into my eyes. It is no very laudable exploit to record, but I once drank three bottles of wine with this same rogue—Sir William Forbes and Sir Alexander Wood being of the party. David Erskine of Cardross keeps his looks better than most of our contemporaries. I hope we shall meet for a longer time." There is no record of their ever having met again.

## • The Lady of the Green Mantle 17

has certain distinctive features drawn from the one and the same haunting dream of his manly adolescence."

In this said novel of *Redgauntlet*, Scott drew portraits (fanciful, of course, in many respects) of his own father, of himself, and of one of his dearest friends, William Clerk, and to all those who take an interest in the personality of the author that novel is perhaps the most intrinsically attractive of the series. We have it on Lockhart's authority, that it contains perhaps more of Scott's personal experiences than any other, or even than all the rest put together. Alan Fairford, to us the real hero in the novel, is a portrait for which Scott sat to himself; while Darsie Latimer, the nominal hero, is his friend William Clerk. The fictitious characters, like the real ones, were budding advocates, both just admitted to the Bar, and both the dearest and most intimate of bosom companions.

The tale of Alan Fairford's falling in love with the lady in the Green Mantle will give us an inkling of the birth of Scott's own sentiments, apart, of course, from the mere fictitious incidents introduced. Here it is in Alan's own words, written to Darsie Latimer:—

"My visitor was undeniably a lady, and probably

considerably above the ordinary rank—very modest, too, judging from the mixture of grace and timidity with which she moved and, at my entreaty, sat down. Her dress was, I should suppose, both handsome and fashionable; but it was much concealed by a walking-cloak of green silk, fancifully embroidered, in which, though heavy for the season, her person was enveloped, and which, moreover, was furnished with a hood.

“The devil take that hood, Darsie! for I was just able to distinguish that, pulled as it was over the face, it concealed from me, as I was convinced, one of the prettiest countenances I have seen, and which, from a sense of embarrassment, seemed to be crimsoned with a deep blush. I could see her complexion was beautiful—her chin finely turned—her lips coral—and her teeth rivals to ivory. But further the deponent sayeth not; for a clasp of gold, ornamented with a sapphire, closed the envious mantle under the incognita's throat, and the cursed hood concealed entirely the upper part of the face.”

The lady, finding herself mistaken in the person she expected to see, finding herself, in fact, face to face with a young, instead of an old, gentleman, retreated hastily, promising to communicate her business in writing.

## • The Lady of the Green Mantle 19

“And she left the apartment, her poor baffled counsel scraping and bowing, and apologising for anything that might have been disagreeable to her, although the front of my offence seems to be my having been discovered to be younger than my father.

“The door was opened—out she went—walked along the pavement, turned down the close, and put the sun, I believe, into her pocket when she disappeared, so suddenly did dulness and darkness sink down on the square when she was no longer visible. I stood for a moment as if I had been senseless, not recollecting what a fund of entertainment I must have supplied to our watchful friends on the other side of the green. Then it darted on my mind that I might dog her, and ascertain at least who or what she was. Off I set—ran down the close, where she was no longer to be seen, and demanded of one of the dyer’s lads whether he had seen a lady go down the close, or had observed which way she turned.

“‘A leddy!’ said the dyer, staring at me with his rainbow countenance. ‘Mr. Alan, what takes you out, rinning like daft, without your hat?’

“‘The devil take my hat!’ answered I, running back, however, in quest of it; snatched it up, and

again sallied forth. But as I reached the head of the close once more, I had sense enough to recollect that all pursuit would be now in vain. . . . I had no mind, by a second sudden appearance, to confirm the report that Advocate Fairford was 'gaen daft,' which had probably spread from Campbell's Close-foot to the Mealmarket Stairs; and so slunk back within my own hole again.

"My first employment was to remove all traces of that elegant and fanciful disposition of my effects from which I had hoped for so much credit, for I was now ashamed and angry at having thought an instant upon the mode of receiving a visit which had commenced so agreeably, but terminated in a manner so unsatisfactory. I put my folios in their places—threw the foils into the dressing-closet—tormenting myself all the while with the fruitless doubt, whether I had missed an opportunity or escaped a stratagem, or whether the young person had been really startled, as she seemed to intimate, by the extreme youth of her intended legal adviser. The mirror was not unnaturally called in to aid; and that cabinet-counsellor pronounced me rather short, thick-set, with a cast of features fitter, I trust, for the bar than the ball—not handsome enough for blushing virgins to pine for my sake, or even to invent sham cases to

bring them to my chambers—yet not ugly enough either to scare those away who came on real business—dark, to be sure, but—*nigri sunt hyacinthi*—there are pretty things to be said in favour of that complexion.

“At length—as common sense will get the better in all cases, when a man will but give it fair play—I began to stand convicted, in my own mind, as an ass before the interview, for having expected too much—an ass during the interview, for having failed to extract the lady’s real purpose—and an especial ass, now that it was over, for thinking so much about it. But I can think of nothing else, and therefore I am determined to think of this to some good purpose.

“You remember Murtough O’Hara’s defence of the Catholic doctrine of confession ; because, ‘by his soul, his sins were always a great burden to his mind, till he had told them to the priest ; and, once confessed, he never thought more about them.’ I have tried his receipt, therefore ; and, having poured my secret mortification into thy trusty ear, I will think no more about this maid of the mist,

‘Who, with no face, as ’twere, outfaced me.’

---



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"—— Four o'clock.

"Plague on her green mantle, she can be nothing better than a fairy ; she keeps possession of my head yet ! All during dinner-time I was terribly absent ; but, luckily, my father gave the whole credit of my reverie to the abstract nature of the doctrine, *Vinco vincentem, ergo vinco te* ; upon which brocard of law the Professor this morning lectured. So I got an early dismissal to my own crib, and here am I studying, in one sense, *vincere vincentem*, to get the better of the silly passion of curiosity—I think—I think it amounts to nothing else—which has taken such possession of my imagination, and is perpetually worrying me."

Later on, his friend Darsie Latimer encounters this same young lady—the green mantle being an important part of the proof of identity. He is himself strongly impressed with her appearance and manners, not knowing that she would afterwards turn out to be his own sister, and writes to his friend words which were, as it were, a paraphrase, as regards Alan Fairford, of what Scott himself had experienced :—

"How do you feel towards this fair *ignis fatuus*, this lily of the desert ? Tell me honestly ; for however the recollection of her may haunt my own mind,

•      **The Lady of the Green Mantle      23**

my love for Alan Fairford surpasses the love of woman. I know, too, that when you do love it will be to

‘Love once and love no more.’

A deep, consuming passion, once kindled in a breast so steady as yours, would never be extinguished but with life.”

## CHAPTER III

### MAKING ACQUAINTANCE

WHERE, and under what real circumstances, Scott first encountered the lady of the Green Mantle, is now undiscoverable, but as to the impression made by her upon his mind, the amusing account given by himself in the preceding narrative is probably not far from the truth. It is very likely, however, as there was no acquaintance struck up at the time between the parties, that the real Alan did not lose trace of the Green Mantle and its wearer, and it is not improbable that, in ways that can easily be imagined, he found that she was in the habit of attending divine service at a certain church.

However that may be, we do know in what way the acquaintance was actually formed. One Sunday morning the congregation meeting at the Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, dispersed at the usual hour. It was raining, and Scott, happily provided with an

umbrella, found that a certain lady, young, pretty, and alone, was without that necessary protection from the weather.

In those days of strict Sabbatarianism there were no carriages plying for hire on the Sunday, so that the state of the weather formed a reasonable excuse for Scott's making an advance to the young lady in all propriety. That he eagerly availed himself of the auspicious opportunity that thus presented itself is not surprising, and, his offer of the shelter of his umbrella being graciously accepted, he escorted her to her home, which, as it turned out, was found to be not far from his father's house.<sup>1</sup>

The acquaintance thus begun was not allowed to sleep. The vicinity of their homes was a happy accident, so that it was the most natural thing in the world for them to return together from church on Sundays, and this became a settled custom. Scott, like a good son, seems to have made a confidante of his mother, who afterwards lent the countenance of propriety to the proceedings by making a third in the party. And a new matter of common interest that

<sup>1</sup> In one of his latest articles in the *Quarterly Review*, Scott remarks: "There have been instances of love-tales being favourably received in England when told under an umbrella and in the midst of a shower."

knit closer the ties of friendship was soon discovered. The two mothers of the young couple had in their own youth been friends and companions, but the acquaintance had been practically dropped, owing to the very retiring lives led by both ladies. They had rarely seen each other for many years, but now the coming together of their children brought about a renewal of the intimacy. No mother's heart could be blind to the mutual interest taken in each other's society by the young people, and it is more than probable that the two ladies took counsel together, and looked forward with hope and sympathy to the possibility of the acquaintance ripening into marriage. The warm affection for Scott always borne by the mother of his beloved one, is revealed to us by events that occurred in the latter years of his life, and that will be referred to in their place.

"Scott's personal appearance at this time," adds Lockhart, "was not unengaging. A lady of high rank, who well remembered him in the old Assembly Rooms, said, 'Young Scott was a comely creature.' He had outgrown the sallowness of early ill-health, and had a fresh, brilliant complexion. His eyes were clear, open, and well set, with a changeful radiance, to which teeth of the most perfect regularity and whiteness lent their assistance; while the noble expanse

and elevation of his brow gave to his whole aspect a dignity far above the charm of mere features. His smile was always delightful ; and one can easily fancy the peculiar intermixture of tenderness and gravity with playful, innocent hilarity and humour in the expression, as being well calculated to fix a lady's eye. His figure, except the blemish in one limb, must in those days have been eminently handsome ; tall, much above the usual standard, it was cast in the very mould of a young Hercules ; the head set on with singular grace, the throat and chest after the truest model of the antique, the hands delicately finished ; the whole outline that of extraordinary vigour, without, as yet, a touch of clumsiness. When he had acquired a little facility of manner, his conversation must have been such as could have dispensed with any exterior advantages, and certainly brought swift forgiveness for the one unkindness of nature."

With regard to the young lady herself at this time, we are unfortunately without any description. As she appeared in middle age, one may judge by the portrait given herewith. That she was young, beautiful, and accomplished, we know ; and those who are more curious may construct for themselves a fancy picture, evolving it out of the lady of the Green

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Mantle in *Redgauntlet*, and the heroines in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Rokeby*, who were more or less drawn by Sir Walter from memories of his early love.

Lockhart, in his notes to the *Lay*, says: "It was hardly necessary to say that the choice of hero had been dictated by the poet's affection for the living descendants of the Baron of Cranstoun; and, now, none can doubt that he dressed out his Margaret of Branksome in the form and features of his own first love. The poem may be considered as the bright consummate flower in which all the dearest dreams of his youthful fancy had at length found expansion for their strength, tenderness, and beauty."

In view of this statement, it is somewhat disappointing to find that, whatever her characteristics may have been, the perusal of the *Lay* is not rewarded by any description of Margaret's person which would confirm Lockhart's theory. From another point of view, it seems extremely unlikely that, in his very first poem, while the circumstances of his attachment were still fresh in the memory of his friends, and while the lady herself was living, Scott would have ventured, even in spirit, to bring her upon the scene. At any rate, the descriptions given of Margaret are meagre in the extreme, con-

sisting of but two short passages. The first is as follows :—

“ Her golden hair streamed free from band,  
Her fair cheek rested on her hand,  
Her blue eyes sought the west afar,  
For lovers love the western star.”

The second description is but a paraphrase of the first :—

“ The knight and lady fair are met,  
And under the hawthorn’s boughs are set.  
A fairer pair were never seen  
To meet beneath the hawthorn green.  
He was stately, young, and tall ;  
Dreaded in battle and loved in hall :  
And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,  
Lent to her cheeks a livelier red ;  
When the half-sigh her swelling breast  
Against the silken ribbon prest ;  
When her blue eyes their secret told,  
Though shaded by her locks of gold—  
Where would you find the peerless fair  
With Margaret of Branksome to compare ? ”

Rather would we believe the strong indication that the poet himself gave, that Matilda in *Rokeby* is the character that most resembles the lady in question. We shall have to refer at greater length to the personal references in that work, but may say here that it was written soon after the death of the lady herself. That recent event had, no doubt, stirred up



in the poet's breast a crowd of tender and sorrowful recollections, that found a fitting shrine in the poem, wherein not only does Scott himself figure as the unfortunate lover of the heroine, but his successful rival is depicted in glowing and generous terms. 1467

In writing to Miss Edgeworth, the Irish novelist, as late as the year 1818, Scott uses these words:—

“I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting, last year, the *Lady of the Lake*, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest ; so I may truly say with Macbeth—

‘I am afraid to think of what I’ve done ;  
Look on’t again I dare not.’

“This much of Matilda I recollect (for that is not easily forgotten), that she was attempted from the existing person of a lady who is now no more ; so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows.”

Knowing what we now know, there was, unknown to his correspondent, a special significance in the words, “for that is not easily forgotten,” the opinion of those of his friends best capable of judging leaving no doubt as to the identity of the lady. The descrip-

tion given by him of Matilda is therefore of interest, and its comparison with our portrait will suggest certain unmistakable points of resemblance :—

“Wreathed in its dark-brown rings, her hair  
 Half hid Matilda's forehead fair,  
 Half hid and half revealed to view  
 Her full dark eye of hazel hue.  
 The rose with faint and feeble streak  
 So slightly tinged the maiden's cheek,  
 That you had said her hue was pale ;  
 But if she faced the summer gale,  
 Or spoke, or sung, or quicker moved ;  
 Or heard the praise of those she loved ;  
 Or when of interest was express'd  
 Aught that waked feeling in her breast,  
 The mantling blood in ready play  
 Rivall'd the blush of rising day.  
 Hers was a soft and pensive grace,  
 A cast of thought upon her face,  
 That suited well the forehead high,  
 The eyelash dark, and downcast eye ;  
 The mild expression spoke a mind  
 In duty firm, composed, resigned ;  
 'Tis that which Roman art has given  
 To mark the maiden Queen of Heaven.  
 In hours of sport that mood gave way  
 To fancy's bright and frolic play,  
 And when the dance or tale or song,  
 In harmless mirth, sped time along,  
 Full oft her doating sire would call  
 His Maud the merriest of them all.”

The name of the young lady was Willamina, and she was the only child and heiress of a cadet

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of the ancient family of Invermay, who afterwards became Sir John Wishart Belches Stuart, Bart., of Fettercairn. Her mother was the eldest daughter of David, sixth Earl of Leven and fifth of Melville.



LADY FORBES.



## CHAPTER IV

### LIGHT THROWN UPON SCOTT'S STORY IN HIS WORKS

THE materials available for tracing the course of Scott's seven years of wooing are not very ample, nor do they afford many of the details that would interest the romantic reader. They consist of sundry letters by himself and certain of his intimate friends, male and female, who were the confidants to whom he unbosomed himself, yet generally with a certain reserve and a repression of the deeper feelings of his heart that were characteristic of his inner nature. Added to these sources of information we have some scanty narratives by some of those friends, and the comparatively brief references made by Lockhart in the *Life*,—references which would have been omitted altogether, but that he felt it absolutely necessary to put an end to the various tales that had been put in circulation by imaginative gossips. Lastly, we have Scott's own revelations, cast in

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romantic form in his works, and in none more so than in his poem of *Rokeby*, where again, as in *Redgauntlet*, he reveals to us much that is in its way autobiographical. It need scarcely be said that the statements made in a romance must not be taken in every respect too literally; but it will not be found difficult, we venture to think, for every one acquainted with Scott's actual history, and with the help given by collateral evidence, to distinguish between the facts and the imaginative variations that are natural to the vehicle under cover of which these revelations were put forth.

We have already said elsewhere that in this poem of *Rokeby* Scott himself figures as the unfortunate lover. In the character of Wilfrid we may therefore expect to find some of the mental and physical qualities of Scott's youth, and we shall not be disappointed. To see how closely Scott took himself as a model, we must bear in mind some of the facts of his early days. When he was about eighteen months old, a feebleness showed itself in his right leg. Notwithstanding every attention that the medical skill of the time was capable of, this feebleness developed itself so far as to render the boy an almost helpless cripple. In this condition, and in the hope that country air and food would, as it afterwards proved

to do, assist nature to effect a restoration of health and strength, the infant was sent to his paternal grandfather's farm at Sandy-Knowe, dominated by the ruined tower of Smailholm, and in the midst of scenery which his pen was thereafter to make famous, —“where every field has its battle-place, and every rivulet its song.”<sup>1</sup> By a happy conjunction of circumstances, he was thus led to a place and among people most capable of giving to his infantile mind, even before he could read, that grounding in the stirring and romantic legends, tradition, and poetry of the Border-land that influenced him through life, and changed his career from law to literature. The lameness, which never left him altogether, though in later youth he recovered from its effects so as to be able to indulge in physical exertion as well as others not so handicapped, compelled a stay-at-home and somewhat solitary life. In his tender and affectionate mother he found a companion with a strong turn to the study of poetry, and a keen pleasure in works of imagination. Homer was familiar to him by translation, and such parts as specially roused his interest were committed to memory before the age of eight; and his accidental discovery that his mother possessed the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.



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plays of Shakespeare led the precocious boy thus early to the enjoyment of the mine of intellectual wealth placed at his disposal. Although, unlike Pope, he did not lisp in numbers, his admiration of poetry had its natural result in imitation. The few verses preserved that were written in early youth, from the age of ten and upwards, are creditable productions, and show the gravity of disposition that early marked him. The fact of his having, apparently before reaching sixteen, composed a poem (which he afterwards destroyed) upon the Siege of Granada, extending to sixteen hundred lines, is an indication of the natural bent of his mind in early youth, and naturally led up, later on, to the "sonnets to his mistress's eyebrows," in which terms he himself indicated the love-poems inspired by his early passion.

It will be seen afterwards that, contrary to what might have been expected, solitude and the company of his own imagination were more congenial to Scott's nature than mixing with his fellows. All these particulars show how closely, if we except the reference to military scenes,—a variation required by the exigencies of the story,—all show how closely the poet described himself in the character of Wilfrid. Even the good-natured contempt and the reproaches with which his father greeted pursuits so much at

variance with the parent's own staid and somewhat severe nature, find a shadowing forth in the following stanzas :—

“ Nought of his sire's ungenerous part  
Polluted gentle Wilfrid's heart ;  
A heart too soft from early life  
To hold with fortune needful strife.  
His sire, while yet a hardier race  
Of numerous sons were Wycliffe's grace,  
On Wilfrid set contemptuous brand ;  
But a fond mother's care and joy  
Were centred in the sickly boy.  
No touch of childhood's frolic mood  
Showed the elastic spring of blood ;  
Hour after hour he loved to pore  
On Shakespeare's rich and varied lore,  
But turned from martial scenes and light,  
From Falstaff's feast and Percy's fight,  
To ponder Jacques' moral strain,  
And muse with Hamlet, wise in vain,  
And weep himself to soft repose  
O'er gentle Desdemona's woes.

“ In youth he sought not pleasures found  
By youth in horse and hawk and hound,  
But loved the quiet joys that wake  
By lonely stream and silent lake ;  
By Deepdale's solitude to lie,  
Where all is cliff and copse and sky ;  
To climb Catcastle's dizzy peak,  
Or lone Pendragon's mound to seek.  
Such was his wont ; for there his dream  
Soared on some wild fantastic theme,

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Of faithful love or ceaseless spring,  
Till contemplation's wearied wing  
The enthusiast could no more sustain,  
And sad he sank to earth again."

We have already mentioned whatever of interest there was attached to Scott's falling in love at first sight, and if we refer to it again in this place before continuing our illustrations of the course of his passion, it is that those who are unbelievers or scoffers may have the benefit of what Ruskin says on the subject, and which may not be unacceptable to our other readers:—

"Well, it does not come in exactly with my subject to-day ; but, by the way, I beg you to observe that there is a bit of love in *Redgauntlet* which is worth any quantity of modern French or English amatory novels in a heap. Alan Fairford has been bred in the strictest discipline of mind and conduct, he is an entirely strong, entirely prudent, entirely pure young Scotchman—and a lawyer. Scott, when he wrote the book, was an old Scotchman ; and had seen a good deal of the world. And he is going to tell you how Love ought first to come to an entirely strong, entirely prudent, entirely pure youth, of his own grave profession.

"How Love ought to come, mind you ! Alan

Fairford is the real hero (next to Nanty Ewart) of the novel; and he is the exemplary and happy hero—Nanty being the suffering one, under hand of Fate.

“Of course you would say, if you didn't know the book, and were asked what should happen (and, with Miss Edgeworth to manage matters instead of Scott or Shakespeare, nothing else would have happened)—Of course the entirely prudent young lawyer will consider what an important step in life marriage is; and will look out for a young person of good connections, whose qualities of mind and moral disposition he will examine strictly before allowing his affections to be engaged; he will then consider what income is necessary for a person in a high legal position, etc. etc. etc.

“Well, this is what did happen, according to Scott, you know;—(or, more likely, I'm afraid, know nothing about it). The old servant of the family announces, with some dryness of manner, one day, that a 'leddy' wants to see Master Alan Fairford for a legal consultation. The prudent young gentleman, upon this, puts his room in the most impressive order, intending to make a first appearance reading a legal volume in an abstracted state of mind. But, on a knock coming at the street door, he can't resist going to look out at the window; and—the servant

maliciously showing in the client without announcement—is discovered peeping out of it. The client is closely veiled—little more than the tip of her nose discernible.

“She is, fortunately, a little embarrassed herself; for she did not want Mr. Alan Fairford at all, but Mr. Alan Fairford’s father. They sit looking at each other—at least he looking at the veil and a green silk cloak—for half a minute. The young lady (for she is young; he has made out that, he admits, and something more, perhaps) is the first to recover her presence of mind; makes him a pretty little apology for having mistaken him for his father; says that, now she has done it, he will answer her purpose, perhaps even better; but she thinks it best to communicate the points on which she requires his assistance in writing—curtsies him, in his endeavour to remonstrate, gravely and inexorably into silence—disappears,—‘and put the sun in her pocket, I believe,’ as she turned the corner, says prudent Mr. Alan. *And keeps it in her pocket for him—evermore.* That is the way one’s Love is sent, when she is sent from Heaven, says the aged Scott.

“But how ridiculous—how entirely unreasonable—how unjustifiable, on any grounds of propriety or common sense!

"Certainly, my good sir, certainly. Shakespeare and Scott can't help that: all they know is—that is the way God and Nature manage it. Of course Rosalind ought to have been more particular in her inquiries about Orlando,—Juliet about the person masked as a pilgrim,—and there is really no excuse for Desdemona's conduct; and we all know what came of it. But, again I say, Shakespeare and Scott could not help that."<sup>1</sup>

If Scott does thus teach how Love does and should come, when it comes from Heaven, he, at any rate,

<sup>1</sup> James I. of Scotland was in his youth imprisoned for many years in England, and the King's Quhair (Book), written during that time, is a love-poem addressed to the princess whom he afterwards married, and who, during his life, was his "affectionate friend, kind adviser, and chief comfort." Her heroic conduct at the time of his assassination is well known. This is how the king recalls his first and only love. Lamenting his imprisoned state, while the birds of the air were free, he continues—

"And therewith cast I down my eyes again,  
Whereas I saw walking under the tower  
Full secretly, new coming her to pleyne,  
The fairest and the freshest youngé flower  
That ever I saw, methought, before that hour,  
At which sudden abate, arose upstart,  
The blood of all my body and my heart!

My wittis all  
Were so o'ercome with pleasure and delight,  
That suddenly my heart became her thrall."

gives forth no uncertain sound as to the unhappiness which, as in his own case, may result from such a passion. In the same novel of *Redgauntlet* are the following passages, which may almost be considered autobiographical :—

“The truth perhaps is that the lover's pleasure, like that of the hunter, is in the chase, and that the brightest beauty loses half its merit, as the fairest flower its perfume, when the willing hand can reach it too easily. There must be doubt—there must be danger—there must be difficulty; and if, as the poet says, the course of ardent affection never does run smooth, it is perhaps because, without some intervening obstacle, that which is called the romantic passion of love, in its high poetical character and colouring, can hardly have an existence—any more than there can be a current in a river without the stream being narrowed by steep banks or checked by opposing rocks.

“Let not those, however, who enter into a union for life without these embarrassments (which delight a Darsie Latimer or a Lydia Languish), and which are perhaps necessary to excite an enthusiastic passion in hearts more firm than theirs, augur worse of their future happiness because their own alliance is formed under calmer auspices. Mutual esteem, an

intimate knowledge of each other's character, seen, as in their case, undisguised by the mists of too partial passion—a suitable proportion of parties in rank and fortune, in tastes and pursuits—are more frequently found in a marriage of reason than in a union of romantic attachment; where the imagination which probably created the virtues and accomplishments with which it invested the beloved object, is frequently afterwards employed in magnifying the mortifying consequences of its own delusion, and exasperating all the stings of disappointment. Those who follow the banners of Reason are like the well-disciplined battalion, which, wearing a more sober uniform and making a less dazzling show, enjoy more safety and even more honour in the conflicts of human life.”

In the same strain still, but many years after, we find Scott addressing the following kindly and sympathetic letter to a young friend whose confidences had evidently taken him back in remembrance to his own youthful romance :—

“I have said nothing on the delicate confidence you have reposed in me. I have not forgotten that I have been young, and must therefore be sincerely interested in those feelings which the best men entertain with some warmth. At the same time,



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experience makes me alike an enemy to premature marriage and to distant engagements. The first adds to our individual cares the responsibilities for the beloved and helpless pledges of our affection, and the last are liable to the most cruel disappointment. But, my good young friend, if you have settled your affections upon a worthy object, I can only hope that your progress in life will be such as to make you look forward with prudence to a speedy union."

And nearly two years later, to the same young friend he says :—

"What you mention of your private feelings on an interesting subject is indeed distressing, but assure yourself that scarce one person out of twenty marries his first love, and scarce one out of twenty of the remainder has cause to rejoice having done so. What we love in these early days is generally rather a fanciful creature of our own than a reality. We build statues of snow, and weep when they melt."

The same moral is taught by Scott in *Rokeby*. Lamenting the unhappiness of Wilfrid in his hopeless passion, Scott utters this warning :—

"Woe to the youth whom fancy gains,  
Winning from reason's hands the reins,  
Pity and woe ! for such a mind  
Is soft, contemplative, and kind ;

And woe to those who train such youth,  
 And spare to press the rights of truth,  
 The mind to strengthen and anneal,  
 While on the stithy glows the steel !  
 Oh, teach him, while your lessons last,  
 To judge the present by the past ;  
 Remind him of each wish pursued,  
 How rich it glowed with promised good ;  
 Remind him of each wish enjoyed,  
 How soon his hopes possession cloyed.  
 Tell him we play unequal game,  
 Whene'er we shoot by fancy's aim ;  
 And ere he strip him for the race,  
 Show the conditions of the chase.  
 Two sisters by the goal are set,  
 Cold Disappointment and Regret ;  
 One disenchants the winner's eyes,  
 And strips of all its worth the prize ;  
 While one augments its gaudy show,  
 More to enhance the loser's woe.  
 The victor sees his fairy gold  
 Transformed, when won, to drossy mould ;  
 But still the vanquished mourns his loss,  
 And rues, as gold, that glittering dross."

In Scott's writings it is difficult to trace any bitterness of spirit on the part of the writer ; but, perhaps, sad as are the truths enunciated in the above quotations, there is in them the expression of some such feeling, and a depreciation of love as a passion, which savours a little of the proverbial sour grapes, and is doubtless the outcome of his own bitter experience.

## CHAPTER V

### INTIMACY AND COURTSHIP

It is one thing to fall in love; continuing in it is another. Love is a seedling which will die of inanition, unless the planting of it is followed up by fostering circumstances. However few and seemingly trifling such circumstances may be, and however unfriendly the surroundings, their existence is necessary for continuance and growth.<sup>1</sup> The "Only a face at the window," as a sentimental song has it, if a solitary event, is not sufficient, and it may be doubted if any man's life has been affected lastingly

<sup>1</sup> "Placing myself in one of the large leathern chairs which flanked the old Gothic chimney, I watched unconsciously the bickering of the blaze which I had fostered. 'And this,' said I alone, 'is the progress and the issue of human wishes! Nursed by the merest trifles, they are first kindled by fancy—nay, are fed upon the vapour of hopes, till they consume the substance they inflame; and man and his hopes, passions, and desires, sink into a worthless heap of ember and ashes.'"—*Rob Roy*.

by such an isolated appearance.<sup>1</sup> In Scott's case there were ample materials for continuance and growth. The first glimpse of his beloved had evidently been sufficient inducement for him to follow it up, and probably his attendance at the Greyfriars, which was not the church his father worshipped in, had this special purpose in view ; and probably, too, the acquaintance thus auspiciously

<sup>1</sup> "John Leech, the artist, then a very young man, resided in the house of the elder Orrinsmith, in Judd Street, London, for eighteen months, while studying the etcher's art ; and Mr. Orrinsmith the younger, though then but a boy, has a vivid remembrance of him, and testifies to the 'charm of his character and temper, his thorough, genial nature, and his gentle manliness.' It is apropos of this period that Mr. Orrinsmith relates a curious story of love at first sight. He describes it as 'the one romantic episode in John Leech's life,' and assures us that its accuracy may be relied on, as he received it from his father's lips. The engraver was walking with his friend and guest one day through Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, when at a parlour window there suddenly appeared the face of a young lady. It was a beautiful face, and at once attracted Leech's attention. He seemed to be immediately overcome by a most lively emotion—evidently love at first sight. His admiration was unbounded, his talk was of nothing else ; and he ended by avowing his determination, should that prove to be possible, to marry the owner of that face. The young artist, adds Mr. Orrinsmith, 'left no stone unturned to obtain an introduction to the family. Once introduced, his handsome face, winning manners, and his then rapidly growing fame, made the way easy, and he very shortly afterwards married the lady of his sudden choice.'"—*Daily News*.

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begun, would have been otherwise brought about by him but for that fortunate circumstance. His family lived a very retired existence, but his connections and personal qualities made him welcome in the best circles in Edinburgh. His father, if at first he felt disapproval of the freer life led by his son, came to see that there was nothing to fear from it, and is reported to have quieted the anxieties of the mother by saying, "My dear Annie, have you not yet perceived that, wherever Walter goes, he is pretty sure to find his bread buttered on both sides?" Sir Walter himself, in his old age, remarks in his Diary, that the desire for solitude was strong in him in early youth, and "even when he was eighteen, when love and ambition threw him more into society." The intimacy commenced by the Sunday walks was continued by Scott's seeking out and getting admission to those circles in which he could meet the young lady. The attraction of her company took him even to the balls held in the Assembly Rooms at Edinburgh, to shine in which his lameness was an impediment. Referring to these balls, Lockhart remarks: "I have heard him, in talking of this part of his life, say, with an arch simplicity of look and tone, which those familiar with him can fill in for themselves, 'It was a proud

night with me, when I first found that a pretty young woman could think it worth her while to sit and talk with me, hour after hour, in the corner of a ball-room, while all the world were capering in our view.'"

It will thus be seen that the intercourse between the young couple seems to have been continued on a familiar footing. In winter they saw each other in Edinburgh at church and in society. In summer, which the lady usually spent at Invermay, her people's place in the Highlands, Scott seems to have paid her family some visits, and to have accompanied her on various excursions. When separated by distance, they corresponded from time to time; he delighted to put at her disposal his knowledge and advice as to literature, and, in fact, constituted himself her literary mentor.

In *Rob Roy* we find Scott utilising his own experiences under such circumstances. Frank Osbaldistone, the nominal hero—for Rob Roy is by many considered as the real hero, as he is certainly the most interesting of the male characters of the story—is a young poet who reads his productions to the lady of his love, and serves her as literary mentor, with the result drawn from Scott's own case. "I dared not," he says in the mouth of the hero,—“I dared not,

indeed, confess to myself the depth of the interest with which Miss Vernon inspired me, or the large share which she occupied in my thoughts. We read together, walked together, rode together, and sat together. The studies which she had broken off upon her quarrel with Rashleigh, she now resumed, under the auspices of a tutor whose views were more sincere, though his capacity was far more limited. The degree of danger which necessarily attended a youth of my age and keen feelings from remaining in close and constant intimacy with an object so amiable and so peculiarly interesting, *all who remember their own sentiments at my age may easily estimate.*"

"Though the mothers had renewed their intercourse, no acquaintance," says Lockhart, "appears to have existed between the other parents until matters had advanced in appearance further than met the approbation of the good Writer to the Signet, Walter's father. Being aware that the young lady, who was highly connected, had prospects in fortune far above his son's, the honourable man conceived it his duty to give her parents warning that he observed a degree of intimacy which, if allowed to go on, might involve the parties in future pain and disappointment. He had heard his son talk of a contemplated excursion to

a part of the country where his neighbour's estates lay, and, not doubting that Walter's real object was different from that he announced, he introduced himself to the young lady's father, with a frank statement that he wished no such affair to proceed without the express sanction of those most interested in the happiness of persons as yet too young to calculate consequences for themselves. Sir John had heard nothing of the intended excursion, and appeared to treat the whole business very lightly. He thanked Mr. Scott for his scrupulous attention, but added that he believed that he was mistaken; and this paternal interference, which Walter did not hear of till long afterwards, produced no change in his relations with the object of his growing attachment."

The love of Wilfrid for Matilda in *Rokeby* finds expression in the following stanzas :—

"Wilfrid must love and woo the bright  
Matilda, heir of Rokeby's knight :  
To love her was an easy hest,  
The *secret* empress of his breast ;  
To woo her was a harder task  
*To one that durst not hope or ask.*  
Yet all Matilda could she gave,  
In pity to her gentle slave ;  
Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,  
And praise, the poet's best reward,



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She read the tales his tastes approved,  
And sung the lays he framed or loved.<sup>1</sup>

“He loved, as many a lay can tell,  
Preserved in Stanmore's lonely dell;  
For his was minstrel's skill. He caught  
The art unteachable, untaught.  
He loved; his soul did nature frame  
For love, and fancy nursed the flame.  
Vainly he loved—for seldom swain  
Of such soft mould is loved again;  
*Silent he loved*—in every gaze  
Was passion—friendship in his phrase.  
So mused his life away.”

Yes! mused his life away—for five years before  
declaring his sentiments.

“For seldom swain  
Of such soft mould is loved again.”

In these words and the condition of temperament that they indicate, may reasonably, we think, be found the keynote of his silent devotion during that long period of probation. Scott's character was, in nearly every respect, one of the manliest on record. If he had lived in the times of chivalry he so dearly loved to portray, he would have worn his lady's glove in his casque and couched his lance with the bravest,

<sup>1</sup> “‘There is a good deal of it,’ she said, glancing along the paper, and interrupting the sweetest sounds which mortal ears can drink in,—those of a youthful poet's verses, namely, read by the lips which are dearest to him.”—*Rob Roy*.

seeking by deeds of prowess to distinguish himself and gain her love, after the manner of the days gone by. But with other days other manners, and with all the manliness that marked his character there was in him that rare and shrinking modesty that is often displayed by men of the highest genius. The adulation of the world moved him not. That which would have puffed out the vanity of lesser gifted men passed over his head unsought, unheeded, and left him unspoiled.<sup>1</sup> Even the fame brought by his novels, the

<sup>1</sup> "Sir Walter at all times laboured under the strangest delusion as to the merits of his own works. On this score he was not only inaccessible to compliments, but insensible to the truth; in fact, at all times he hated to talk of any of his productions. . . . One morning, I recollect, I went into his library, shortly after the publication of *The Lady of the Lake*, and, finding Miss Scott there, who was then a very young girl, I asked her, 'Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like *The Lady of the Lake*, with which everybody is so much enchanted?' Her answer was, with affecting simplicity, 'Oh, I have not read it. Papa says there's nothing so bad for young girls as reading *bad poetry*.' . . . 'Well, Sir Walter,' I said, 'I was dining yesterday, where your works became the subject of very copious conversation.' His countenance immediately became overcast, and his answer was, 'Well, I think I must say your party might have been better employed.' 'I knew it would be your answer,'—the conversation continued,—'nor would I have mentioned it but that Dr. Chalmers was present, and was by far the most decided in his expressions of pleasure and admiration of any of the party.' This instantly roused him to the most vivid animation. 'Dr. Chalmers?' he repeated; 'that throws new

authorship of which was so long concealed, would have been a posthumous one if his wishes in the matter could have been consulted. He only acknowledged these works when the financial crisis of his latter days rendered further secrecy impossible. Never was man less presuming, or more given to self-depreciation when comparing himself with others. Add to this, that in anything that affected the deeper feelings of the heart, in his tender feelings towards those near and dear to him, we have it from Lockhart, that Scott had all the sensitiveness of a maiden.<sup>1</sup>

light on the subject—to have produced any effect upon the mind of such a man as Dr. Chalmers is indeed something to be proud of. Dr. Chalmers is a man of the truest genius. I will thank you to repeat all you can recollect that he said on the subject.' I did so accordingly, and I can recall no similar instance."—*James Ballantyne*.

*Diary, 14th September 1826.*—"Two young Frenchmen made their way to our sublime presence in guerdon of a laudatory copy of French verses sent us the evening before, by way of 'Open Sesame,' I suppose. I have not read them, nor shall I. No man that ever wrote a line despised the *pap* of praise so heartily as I do. There is nothing I scorn more, except those who think the ordinary sort of praise or censure is matter of the least consequence."

<sup>1</sup> No more touching instance of this tender sensitiveness for his friends can be related, than that which refers to his old and intimate friend, Daniel Terry the actor, at a time when that gentleman had been dead three years, and Scott, with shadows flitting at times across his brain, was within a fortnight of his own passing away. The narration is by Lockhart: "On the

Such modesty and sensitiveness, carried to excess, render a man but an indifferent wooer ; for, however modesty may be praised by scribes and moralists, it is not an armour that can do much service in the camp of love, nor is it a characteristic that is really

third day Mr. Laidlaw and I again wheeled him about the small piece of lawn and shrubbery in front of the house for some time ; and the weather being delightful, and all the richness of summer around him, he seemed to taste fully the balmy influences of nature. The sun getting very strong, we halted the chair in a shady corner, just within the verge of his verdant arcade around the court wall ; and breathing the coolness of the spot, he said, ' Read me some amusing thing—read me a bit of Crabbe.' I brought out the first volume of his old favourite that I could lay hand on, and turned to what I remembered as one of his most favourite passages in it—the description of the arrival of the Players in the Borough. He listened with great interest, and also, as I soon perceived, with great curiosity. Every now and then he exclaimed, ' Capital—excellent—very good—Crabbe has lost nothing,'—and we were too well satisfied that he considered himself as hearing a new production, when, chuckling over one couplet, he said, ' Better and better—but how will poor Terry endure those cuts?' I went on with the poet's terrible sarcasms upon the theatrical life, and he listened eagerly, muttering, ' Honest Dan,'—' Dan won't like this.' At length I reached those lines—

' Sad happy race ! soon raised and soon depressed,  
Your days all passed in jeopardy and jest :  
Poor without prudence, with afflictions vain,  
Not warmed by misery nor enriched by gain.'

' Shut the book,' said Sir Walter ; ' I can't stand more of this—it will touch Terry to the very quick.' "

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appreciated by the fair sex under such circumstances, whatever their lip language may be. The qualities opposite to their own, but not, of course, carried to any extreme of injudiciousness, are more likely to be attractive to them. It is another illustration of the old adage that "none but the brave deserve the fair." Ardour in pursuit, with even a touch of audacity, is more likely to be successful, and the sensitive modesty in love affairs that we instinctively consider a grace and ornament in womankind, generally leads to the discomfiture of the man so endowed.

The depths of Scott's passion and the fervour of his feelings were kept securely under control. Love was, as he termed it—

"The secret empress of his breast."

But

"To woo her was a harder task  
To one who durst not hope or ask."

And so

'Silent he loved—in every gaze  
Was passion—friendship in his phrase."

It is to be presumed that the correspondence between the parties—the excuse for which was literature—was open to the parents of the lady. So

discreetly did he carry on the acquaintance, so carefully guarded were their personal intimacy and correspondence in every respect, that, as we have seen, not a shadow of suspicion was raised in the mind of her father, and that the presentiments of the shrewd lawyer, his own father, seem to have been quite allayed by the assurances received from Sir John.

Meantime the pent-up passion in his breast, gradually growing with what it fed on, sought vent in secret ways, common to ardent lovers of an imaginative turn of mind. Sonnets to his mistress's eyebrows he himself admits, and the few of his intimate friends who were made the confidants of his secret, spoke of numerous poems inspired by his impassioned feelings—poems, curiously enough, which their critical faculties, unobscured by friendly sympathy, did not consider of any special literary merit, and which were never to come to her knowledge. We have good grounds for fancying him haunting the footsteps of the beloved, creating, if we may be Hibernian enough to say it, with the innocent hypocrisy of love, chance meetings ; seeking out the society and amusements that otherwise had little attraction to him, because she might be there ; haunting her dwelling-place, and gazing up with rapt devotion at her window ;

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and all the hundred and one things which seem so childish and absurd to third parties, and yet are of such serious import to the one person concerned. Scott lets us into the secret ; for, in describing Wilfrid in similar circumstances, he is only picturing himself in poetical guise :—

“ But Wilfrid, son to Rokeby's foe,  
 Must the dear privilege forego,  
 By Greta's side, in evening grey,  
 To steal upon Matilda's way,  
 Striving, with fond hypocrisy,  
 For careless step and vacant eye ;  
 Calming each anxious look and glance,  
 To give the meeting all to chance,  
 Or framing, as a fair excuse,  
 The book, the pencil, or the muse :  
 Something to give, to sing, to say,  
 Some modern tale, some ancient lay.  
 Then, while the longed-for minutes last,—  
 Ah ! minutes quickly over-past !—  
 Recording each expression free  
 Of kind or careless courtesy,  
 Each friendly look, each softer tone,  
 As food for fancy when alone.  
 All this is o'er ; but still, unseen,  
 Wilfrid may lurk in Eastwood green,  
 To watch Matilda's wonted round,  
 While springs the heart at every sound.  
 She comes !—'tis but a passing sight,  
 Yet serves to cheat the weary night ;  
 She comes not—He will wait the hour  
 When her lamp lightens in the tower ;

'Tis something yet, if, as she passed,  
Her shade is o'er the lattice cast.  
'What is my life, my hope?' he said ;  
'Alas ! a transitory shade.'

" Thus wore his life, though reason strove  
For mastery in vain with love,  
Forcing upon the thoughts the sum  
Of present woes and ills to come,  
While still he turned impatient ear  
From Truth's intrusive voice severe.  
Gentle, indifferent, and subdued,  
In all but this, unmoved he viewed  
Each outward change of ill and good ;  
But Wilfrid, docile, soft, and mild,  
Was Fancy's spoilt and wayward child ;  
In her bright car she bade him ride,  
With one fair form to grace his side,  
Or, in some wild and lone retreat,  
Flung her high spells around his seat,  
Bathed in her dews his languid head,  
Her fairy mantle o'er him spread,  
For him her opiates gave to flow,  
Which he who tastes can ne'er forego,  
And placed him in her circle, free  
From every stern reality,  
Till, to the visionary, seem  
Her day-dreams truth, and truth a dream.

" More wouldst thou know—yon tower survey,  
Yon couch unpressed since dawn of day,  
Yon untrimmed lamp, whose yellow gleam  
Is mingling with the cold moonbeam,  
And yon thin form !—the hectic red  
On his pale cheek unequal spread ;  
The head reclined, the loosened hair,  
The limbs relaxed, the mournful air. .



See ! he looks up,—a woeful smile  
 Lightens his woe-worn cheek the while,—  
 Till fancy wakes some idle thought,  
 To gild the ruin she has wrought ;  
 For, like the bat of Indian brakes,  
 Her pinions fan the wound she makes,  
 And soothing thus the dreamer's pain,  
 She drinks his life-blood from the vein.  
 Now to the lattice turn his eyes,  
 Vain hope ! to see the sun arise.  
 The moon with clouds is still o'ercast,  
 Still howls by fits the stormy blast ;  
 Another hour must wear away  
 Ere the East kindle into day,  
 And hark ! to waste that weary hour,  
 He tries the minstrel's magic power.

### Song

#### TO THE MOON

“ Hail to thy cold and clouded beam,  
 Pale pilgrim of the troubled sky !  
 Hail, though the mists that o'er thee stream  
 Lend to thy brow their sullen dye !  
 How should thy pure and peaceful eye  
 Untroubled view our scenes below,  
 Or how a tearless beam supply  
 To light a world of war and woe !

“ Fair Queen ! I will not blame thee now,  
 As once by Greta's fairy side ;  
 Each little cloud that dimmed thy brow  
 Did then an angel's beauty hide.  
 And if the shades I then could chide,  
 Still are the thoughts to memory dear ;  
 For, while a softer strain I tried,  
 They hid my blush and calmed my fear.

\*

“ Then did I swear thy ray serene  
Was formed to light some lonely dell,  
By two fond lovers only seen,  
Reflected from the crystal well,  
Or sleeping on their mossy cell,  
Or quivering on the lattice bright,  
Or glancing on their couch, to tell  
How swiftly wanes the summer night ! ”

The warm-heartedness, geniality, liveliness, and companionability of Walter Scott endeared him in the affections of a large number of friends, not by any means confined to the sterner sex, nor to youth alone. To many of the most intimate of these his romantic attachment was no secret. And it is scarcely to be supposed possible that the object of his passion could for so long a time have remained in ignorance of the purpose of his attentions. That she must have had a strong liking and regard for the man who courted her so long and so patiently, can scarce be doubted ; but how far, if ever, her heart was really touched, there are no materials to afford us certain information. The beneficial influence which this attachment, while it lasted, exercised upon Scott's character, is, however, certain. There is nothing like a pure and hopeful affection for protecting a youth against the perils incidental to his time of life, and for keeping before him a lofty and constant incentive to well-doing. In his case it had a power-

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ful influence, not only on his moral character, but also in determining, during the years that preceded his call to the Bar, the steadfast diligence that marked his pursuit of legal studies, in themselves somewhat distasteful to a person of his temperament.

Though the lady was friendly, and encouraged his devotion, we cannot find that she committed herself in any definite manner until 1795, when they had been acquainted over five years. It would appear that Scott then pleaded for an engagement more or less formal. Let him speak for himself. In March of that year, writing to a cousin, he says : "The lady you allude to has been in town all this winter, and going a good deal into public, which has not at all altered the meekness of her manners. Matters, you see, stand much as they did." But to another friend, in the month of August, he writes a different tale. He says : "It gave me the highest satisfaction to find by the receipt of your letter that you had formed precisely the same opinion with me, both with regard to the interpretation of Miss Stuart's letter as highly flattering and favourable, and to the mode of conduct I ought to pursue ; for, after all, what she has pointed out is the most prudent line of conduct for us both, at least till better days—which I think myself now entitled to suppose she, as well as myself, will look

forward to with pleasure. If you were surprised at reading this important billet, you may guess how agreeably I was so at receiving it; for I had, to anticipate disappointment, struggled to suppress every rising gleam of hope; and it would be very difficult to describe the mixed feelings her letter occasioned, which, *entre nous*, terminated in a very hearty fit of crying. I read over her epistle about ten times a day, and always with new admiration of her generosity and candour—and, as often, take shame to myself for the mean suspicions which, after knowing her so long, I could listen to while endeavouring to guess how she would conduct herself. To tell you the truth, I cannot but confess that my *amour propre*, which one would expect should have been exalted, has suffered not a little upon this occasion through a sense of my own unworthiness. . . . I ought perhaps to tell you, what indeed you will perceive, that I was always attentive, while consulting with you upon the subject of my declaration, rather to under than over rate the extent of our intimacy. . . . Oh, for November! Our meeting will be a little embarrassing. How will she look, &c., &c., &c., are the important subject of my present conjectures—how different from what they were three weeks ago! I give you leave to laugh when I tell you, seriously,

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I had begun to dwindle, <sup>\*</sup>peak, and pine upon the subject ; but now, after the charge I have received, it were a shame to resemble Pharaoh's lean kine. If good living and plenty of exercise can avert that calamity, I am in little danger of disobedience, and so conclude."

Such a letter as this cannot, we think, be read without deepening the interest of the reader in the amiable and loving nature of the writer. Lockhart says he had much hesitation in reproducing it, but could not make up his mind to omit what seemed to him a most exquisite revelation of the whole character of Scott at this critical period of his history, more especially of his habitual effort to suppress, so far as words were concerned, the more tender feelings which were in no heart deeper than in his.

We see from the letter that the romantic attachment which had been ripening for so many years had culminated in an express declaration to the lady, and that she had received it in a highly encouraging manner. To conjecture what her answer must have been, requires us perhaps to look at what Scott says of it in the light of his own financial position at the time. He was just turned four-and-twenty, and had for the last two years been received at the Bar. He

had no reason, at any rate during his father's lifetime, to look for aught but slight assistance from that quarter, and his fee-book discloses that his income from his professional practice was, for the first of these years, the feeble sum of £24, 3s., and for the second, only £57, 15s. It must be remembered also, that at this period he had not even dabbled in literature, so that it was from his professional labours alone that he had to look for the income necessary to support a wife and a prospective family. No doubt the lady would have been well "tochered ;" but, to a sensitive disposition like his, marriage could only be proposed when he had gained a fairly independent position for himself. Bearing these things in mind, and reading between the lines of this letter, we can readily imagine what was the most prudent course for them both, which Scott says she had pointed out. While accepting him as a suitor for her hand, and giving him every indication of hope, she, in all probability, did not absolutely engage herself. She probably alluded to the fact, which no doubt had been commented on by him, that, in the natural course of events, some considerable time must elapse before he would be in a position to give his declaration its practical consequence. It is quite likely, too, that she pointed to this as a reason why a formal

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engagement at so early a stage would be imprudent, thus leaving a loophole open in case the feelings of either party might undergo a change that would render an ultimate union undesirable or impossible. That some such change did happen on her side, we shall shortly see.

There is no record of what took place in November at the meeting which Scott expected would be slightly embarrassing, nor as to their intercourse during that winter. We may assume that, in all probability, affairs remained on the footing indicated in the lady's letter until she left Edinburgh in 1796, just before the birth of the tiny rill, the precursor of the mighty stream of poetry and romance that, for so many years, poured forth to delight the world, and that, we can scarcely err in thinking, will continue to charm future generations while the English language remains.

This event was Scott's spirited translation of the wild and unearthly German ballad of *Lenore*, by Bürger. Written after supper one evening, and carried next morning to Miss Cranstoun, a dear friend and confidante, it at once created the greatest interest in Edinburgh literary circles. Now, this lady was in the secret of Scott's attachment, and she knew how high an admiration Miss Stuart had of his abilities,

whatever her real sentiments may have been on the more delicate question. Knowing, too, that she and Scott were in the habit of corresponding upon literary subjects, Miss Cranstoun thought she might perhaps, in an innocent manner, further his suit by letting it be seen that he had attained the dignity of an author whose compositions were deemed worthy of print. Scott was about to pay a visit in the country at a house where he expected to meet the lady of his love, so Miss Cranstoun had some copies of the ballad struck off in the most elegant style, and one of these, beautifully bound and ornamented, was sent after Scott, to be presented to the lady in question.

On her deathbed Miss Cranstoun recounted that the poem was read and highly appreciated, and that she had flattered herself that her kindly plot had not been imagined in vain ; but, alas !—

“The well-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men  
Gang aft a-gley,  
And lea’e us naught but grief and pain  
For promised joy.”

This visit, from which Miss Cranstoun had such expectations, took place in April 1796. In the month following, his aunt, Miss Christian Rutherford, being in the north of Scotland, expected among



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other places to be at the paternal home of her whom Scott, in his letters to his friends, called his "*chère adorable*." We accordingly find him writing to his aunt: "Pray let me know, above all, whether you have been at Invermay, and all the &c.'s, &c.'s, &c.'s, which the question involves."

## CHAPTER VI

### DISAPPOINTMENT

IN the autumn of that year he himself visited Invermay. It was his last visit, a visit looked forward to with eager expectation and a beating heart, and that terminated disastrously for his hopes and happiness. The fair one did not give him the welcome he anticipated ; there was a rival in the field whose position and prospects overshadowed those of the young advocate ; who took his leave with the conviction forcing itself upon him, that his long, long years of faithful devotion had been spent in vain, and that his happy dream was at an end. The chill that his feelings underwent found expression in a letter to his dear friend Miss Cranstoun, from whose reply the following will be read with interest :—

“I bless the gods for conducting your poor dear soul to Perth. When I consider the wilds, the forests, the lakes, the rocks—and the spirits in which you

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must have whispered to their startled echoes, it amazeth me how you escaped. Had you but dismissed your little squire and Earwig [a servant boy and pony], and spent a few days as Orlando would have done, all posterity might have profited by it; but to trot quietly away without one stanza to despair—never talk to me of love again—never—never—never! I am dying for a collection of your exploits. In the meantime, Heaven speed you! Be sober, and hope to the end. . . . I have nothing new to tell you but that I am most affectionately yours. Many an anxious thought I have about you. Farewell.”

But the end till which she bid him hope was not then far off. The news of Miss Stuart's engagement to his rival came quickly to put a melancholy termination to his suspense, if, indeed, after what had happened at Invermay he had entertained any doubt. The intelligence caused much anxiety to those of his friends who knew and loved him best. They seem to have been much alarmed at the possible effect that this bitter disappointment might have upon his mind and feelings. One friend wrote: “Mr. Forbes marries Miss Stuart. This is not good news. I always dreaded there was some self-deception on the part of our romantic friend, and I now shudder at the

violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind. Who is it says, 'Men have died and worms have eaten them, but not for LOVE'? I hope sincerely it may be verified on this occasion."

Over the agony of that wounded spirit a veil is drawn. The Highland glens and streams and wastes, which his genius was thereafter to render so renowned in story, were the silent witnesses of his sorrow. Its height, depth, and intensity few even of those who may have passed through a similar trying ordeal can probe to the full extent. Few possess his singular delicacy of temperament, his exquisite tenderness, depth of affection, and strength of feeling; and to few is it given to cherish through the long years a romantic attachment such as his—an attachment commencing with his youth, growing up with his growth, and reaching out its fibres too deeply into every part of his nature to be ever uprooted.

Happily to him was left, as a consoling agency that never deserted him, and saved his life from possible wreck, another passion that was deeply implanted in his nature. His intense affection for his native land, its romantic traditions, scenery, and poetry, remained, and autobiographic in its way is the following quotation from the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the first serious product of his mighty

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genius, and, as Lockhart expresses it, "the bright consummate flower in which all the dearest dreams of his youthful fancy had at length found expansion for their strength, tenderness, and beauty."

In the character of the ancient Harper he says :—

" O Caledonia ! stern and wild,  
Meet nurse for a poetic child !  
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,  
Land of the mountain and the flood,  
Land of my sires ! what mortal hand  
Can e'er untie the filial band  
That knits me to thy rugged strand ?  
*Still, as I view each well-known scene,  
Think what is now, and what hath been,  
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,  
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left ;  
And thus I love them better still,  
Even in extremity of ill.*  
By Yarrow's streams still let me stray,<sup>1</sup>  
Though none should guide my feeble way ;  
Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break,  
Although it chill my withered cheek ;  
Still lay my head by Teviot Stone,  
Though there, forgotten and alone,  
The Bard may draw his parting groan."

In other stanzas from *The Lady of the Lake*, Scott, speaking in his own person, and alluding to the influence of poetry in alleviating his own distresses,

<sup>1</sup> This and the following three lines form the appropriate inscription on the Scott Monument at Selkirk, of which shire he was Sheriff.

finishes the poem by the following beautiful farewell to the Harp of the North, one of the allusions in which will recall to the reader the poetical night-watches of Wilfrid, already quoted from *Rokeby* :—

“ Harp of the North, farewell ! The hills grow dark,  
 On purple peaks in deeper shade descending ;  
 In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark,  
 The deer, half-seen, are to the covert wending.  
 Resume thy wizard elm ! the fountain lending,  
 And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy ;  
 Thy numbers sweet with nature’s vespers blending,  
 With distant echo from the fold and lea,  
 And herd-boy’s evening pipe, and hum of housing bee.

“ Yet, once again, farewell, thou Minstrel harp !  
 Yet, once again, forgive my feeble sway,  
 And little reck I of the censure sharp  
 May idly cavil at an idle lay.  
*Much have I owed thy strains in life’s long way,  
 Through secret woes the world has never known,  
 When on the weary night dawned wearier day,  
 And bitterer was the grief devoured alone.  
 That I outlive such woes, Enchantress ! is thine own.*

“ Hark ! as my lingering footsteps slow retire,  
 Some Spirit of the Air has waked thy string !  
 ’Tis now a seraph bold, with touch of fire,  
 ’Tis now the brush of Fairy’s passing wing.  
 Receding now, the dying numbers ring  
 Fainter and fainter down the rugged dell,  
 And now the mountain breezes scarcely bring  
 A wandering witch-note of the distant spell—  
 And now, ’tis silent all !—Enchantress, fare thee well !”

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As to any poems arising directly and at the time out of this attachment, the only one preserved is the following:—

“ The violet in her greenwood bower,  
When birchen boughs with hazel mingles,  
May boast itself the fairest flower  
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

“ Though fair her gems of azure hue,  
Beneath the dewdrops' weight reclining,  
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue  
More sweet through watery lustre shining.

“ The summer sun that dew shall dry,  
E'er yet the sun be past its morrow,  
Nor longer in my false love's eye  
Remained the tear of parting sorrow.”

Many years after this was written, Scott, at the time of sending these verses to some Miscellany, wrote to his friend Mr. Morritt about them in these half-scornful terms: “There is a trifle I intend to send,—a pitiful sonnet wrote in former days to my mistress's eyebrows, or rather eyelid, after it had wept itself dry.” Notwithstanding this, we should, perhaps, guard ourselves against a thought that our sympathy with Scott in his disappointment is apt to engender, when we see this allusion to his “false love.” A poet idealises, and the use of the words does not therefore imply that the lady deserved so serious a reproach as it would indicate. And yet,

partisan-like, we cannot but feel that Scott received hard usage at her hands, and that she ought not to have given him the encouragement she did, if she had no intention that his suit should prosper. We cannot gauge what her feelings and intentions were. The affections are not under control, and, as a pebble may turn a stream at its source, causing it to flow into a frozen ocean instead of into a summer sea, so little things, apparently insignificant in themselves, may change the current of inclination; and who shall distribute the blame? Lockhart, writing at a time when the lady's children were alive, was careful to avoid all allusions that might give pain, and, besides concealing names, was solicitous to let it be known that no fault could be attached to any of the parties concerned. It is possible that in this he erred on the side of generosity and good feeling, or perhaps from a conviction of what Scott's own wishes would have been under the circumstances.

However it may have been, we know that even the best of women can in their love affairs be very cruel, and the world does not visit their actions with any degree of asperity. It is a prerogative of the sex to make themselves attractive, and with more than one aspirant, some degree of what may be called encouragement is natural from various points of view.



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If a woman were to feel bound to marry any man to whom she makes herself specially agreeable, and in whose society she takes pleasure, her kingdom, its enjoyments, and the choice of a partner, would be much circumscribed. Someone must, of course, suffer. As a rule, the suffering is temporary. It is only in the case of a highly-strung and deeply sensitive disposition like that of Scott's that the effects are life-lasting.

In the poem of *Rokeby*, it will be remembered, the rivals for the love of Matilda are Wilfrid, the poet, and Redmond, characters considered (poetical licence and the exigencies of the tale being duly allowed for) as prototypes of Scott and Forbes. Hence the following lines may throw some light upon Miss Stuart's dealings with her unsuccessful admirer :—

“ She read the tales his taste approved,  
And sung the lays he framed or loved ;  
Yet, loth to nurse his fatal flame  
Of hopeless love in friendship's name,  
In kind caprice, she oft withdrew  
The favouring glance to friendship due,  
Then grieved to see her victim's pain,  
And gave the dangerous smiles again.”

Whether blame attached to anyone or not, we come to the one great fact that Scott was rejected, and that the lady married his rival, young William Forbes, in

January 1797. The rival, though successful, was no hated one. As boys, as young men, as Volunteers, Scott and he were intimate friends, and their friendship stood the test of time and rivalry, ending only in the death of Forbes, four years before Scott himself left this earthly scene.

There seems every probability that with the ending of his long courtship came the end of Scott's personal acquaintance with his early love. There is nothing to indicate that she ever saw him after the last meeting at Invermay. Perhaps Scott thought it best to keep out of the way—perhaps the lady had no desire for the survival of a friendship that she must once have entertained very strongly. A rejected lover is apt to become an embarrassment, and his appearance, however well he may comport himself, is like a skeleton at the feast. He may even become an object of dislike. It seems almost unnatural that a woman who will shower her amiabilities on the merest stranger, will treat with the most marked avoidance, and even disdain, the man who has honourably and devotedly loved her, but been rejected. By such after-treatment she wounds still more deeply the unhappy lover. To find himself unsuccessful is pain enough, but to see that kindness and friendship in the one being who is to him

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more than any woman in the wide world has turned to dislike, is the cruellest blow of all. "The pain inflicted upon us by those we love is the pain that lasts." Yet women, and good and modest women, constantly take this course instead of the true womanly part, if there be nothing unworthy or unsuitable about the man, of endeavouring to pour the balm of their sympathy and friendship into the heart they have already been the means of distressing sadly enough. Real friends are not so plentiful in the world that it is desirable wantonly to throw them away; and no truer or better friend will probably be found than such a man, who, passing through the furnace of affliction, has been turned from a lover into a friend. The beneficial and powerful influence of a good woman in such cases, who can tell?

The friendship of his former love seems to have been the only one estranged from him during his life.<sup>1</sup> He gathered around him a circle of dear

<sup>1</sup> "Spent in taking farewell and adieus, which had been put off till now. A melancholy ceremonial, with some a useless one; yet there are friends whom it sincerely touches one to part with. It is the cement of life giving way in a moment. Another unpleasant circumstance is—one is called upon to recollect those whom death or estrangement has severed, after starting merrily together in the voyage of life."—*Diary*, 21–22 October 1831.

friends of all classes, the equal of which few could boast, and his biographer records that it is not known that any one of them was ever lost to him—a striking testimony this of the affectionate esteem in which he was held by all with whom he came in contact.<sup>1</sup>

In Scott's case, the lady's husband remained his friend, and they saw each other from time to time; but the wife living out of Edinburgh, and Scott no longer going into society, but leading a retired life, half the year in the country performing his duties as Sheriff, and the other half when in town in attending the Court of Session, of which he was one of the  
• Clerks, it would not appear that any occasion of meeting arose.

<sup>1</sup> "The wide enclosure at the Abbey of Dryburgh was thronged with young and old; and when the coffin was taken from the hearse and again laid on the shoulders of the afflicted serving-men, one deep sob burst from a thousand lips."—*Lockhart*.

## CHAPTER VII

### SIR WILLIAM FORBES

WE have said that the rival was no hated one. Something of the chivalrous spirit that animated the two friends may be thus indicated in *Rokeby*:—

“The bickering fagot sparkled bright,  
And gave the scene of love to sight,  
Bade Wilfrid's cheek more lively glow,  
Played on Matilda's neck of snow,  
Her nut-brown curls and forehead high,  
And laughed in Redmond's azure eye.  
Two lovers by the maiden sate,  
Without a gleam of jealous hate ;  
The maid her lovers sat between,  
With open brow and equal mien :  
It is a sight but rarely spied,  
Thanks to man's wrath and woman's pride.”

The position and prospects of William Forbes rendered him, from a worldly point of view, a far more suitable match than Scott, whose income and prospects we have before alluded to. Son and heir of Sir William Forbes, Bart., of Pitsligo, and successor



SIR WILLIAM FORBES,  
SEVENTH BARONET OF PITSLIGO.



to title, estates, and banking business, young Forbes was a man of intellect, ability, and character, and distinguished by a high-minded generosity and kindliness of disposition. In every way was he a suitor worthy of the lady he married, and her personal charms and intelligence were of no mean order. The marriage was a happy one; and upon her death, thirteen years after, the bereaved husband withdrew almost entirely from the world, and devoted himself to the society and education of the children she had left behind. Of these, the youngest and best known was the late Principal Forbes, a distinguished man of science, one of whose affectionate characteristics was his idolisation of the memory of the mother that he had lost so early in life.

A portrait of Sir William Forbes will be found in these pages. As no description of his person is now available, we may give, as pendant to our likeness, the portraiture of Redmond, the fictitious and successful rival of Wilfrid, and the prototype of the real rival :—

“ Thus Bertram might the bearing trace  
Of the bold youth who led the chase ;  
Who paused to list for every sound,  
Climb every height to look around,



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Then rushing on with naked sword,  
Each dingle's bosky depth explored.  
'Twas Redmond—by the azure eye ;  
'Twas Redmond—by the locks that fly,  
Disordered from his glowing cheek ;  
Mien, face, and form, young Redmond speak.  
A form more active, light, and strong,  
Ne'er shot the ranks of war along ;  
The modest, yet the manly mien  
Might grace the court of maiden queen ;  
A face more fair you well might find,  
For Redmond's knew the sun and wind,  
Nor boasted, from their tinge when free,  
The charm of regularity ;  
But every feature had the power  
To add the expression of the hour :  
Whether gay wit and humour shy,  
Danced in the light of h's blue eye ;  
Or bended brow, and glance of fire,  
And kindling cheek, spoke Erin's ire ;  
Or soft and saddened glances show  
Her ready sympathy with woe ;  
Or in that wayward mood of mind  
When various feelings are combined,  
When joy and sorrow mingle near,  
And hope's bright wings are checked by fear,  
And rising doubts keep transport down,  
And anger lends a short-lived frown ;  
In that strange mood which maids approve,  
Even when they dare not call it love ;  
With every change his features played,  
As aspens show the light and shade."

In the introductory epistle of the fourth canto of  
*Marmion*, an epistle addressed to his early friend,

James Skene, who was married to a sister of Forbes, occur references to their youthful frolics, and Forbes is alluded to, though not by name. As some indication of the intimacy of the parties, the passage is interesting :—

“And blithesome nights, too, have been ours,  
When Winter stript the summer bowers.  
Careless we heard what now I hear,  
The wild blast sighing deep and drear,  
When fires were bright, and lamps beamed gay,  
And ladies tuned the lovely lay ;  
And he was held a laggard soul  
Who shunned to quaff the sparkling bowl.<sup>1</sup>  
Then he whose absence we deplore,  
Who breathes the gale of Devon’s shore,  
The longer missed, deplored the more ;  
And thou and I, and dear-loved Rae,  
*And one whose name I must not say,—*  
*For not Mimosa’s tender tree*  
*Shrinks sooner from the touch than he,—*  
In merry chorus, well combined,  
With laughter drowned the whistling wind.

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<sup>1</sup> “Also feverish and a slight headache. So much for claret and champagne. I begin to be unfit for a good fellow. Like Mother Cole, in the *Minor*, a thimbleful upsets me,—I mean, annoys my stomach, for my brains do not suffer. Well, I have had my times of these merry doings,—

‘The haunch of deer and the wine’s red dye,  
Never bard loved them better than I.’

But it was for the sake of sociality ; never for the flask or the venison. That must end—is ended.”

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Mirth was within ; and Care without  
 Might gnaw her nails to hear our shout.  
 Not but amid the buxom scene  
 Some grave discourse might intervene—  
 Of the good horse that bore him best,  
 His shoulder, hoof, and arching crest :  
 For, like mad Tom's, our chiefest care  
 Was horse to ride, and weapon wear.  
 Such nights we've had ; and though the game  
 Of manhood be more sober tame,  
 And though the field-day, or the drill,  
 Seem less important now—yet still  
 Such may we hope to share again.  
 The sprightly thought inspires my strain !  
 And mark how, like a horseman true,  
 Lord Marmion's march I thus renew." <sup>1</sup>

Our narrative would be 'incomplete without some notice of the kindly and generous part played by Sir William Forbes in the later stages of Scott's career.

When the great financial disaster arrived that overwhelmed Scott, and clouded the latter days of his life, latter days marked by such heroic courage, gigantic effort, and such cost to his health and mind that makes one's heart bleed to think of, Sir William Forbes, the friend of his youth, and whose bank was among the largest creditors, came forward

<sup>1</sup> The gentlemen referred to belonged to the Yeomanry Volunteers, raised to repel the threatened invasion of the first Napoleon.

in a noble manner with offers which Scott's pride and determination to rely upon himself alone induced him to refuse. But his friend, as chairman of the committee of creditors, did everything in his power to lighten the burden that weighed upon the unfortunate author. One among many instances of this may be mentioned. A firm of Jews, regardless of the fact that Sir Walter, instead of seeking the relief that the law would have afforded him, announced his intention, if life permitted him to labour long enough, to pay his creditors in full, thought to get their pound of flesh more speedily by imprisoning him for debt. Sir William avoided this by paying the sum out of his own pocket, and, with characteristic delicacy, concealed the fact, and Sir Walter only knew of it after the death of his friend had rendered all thanks impossible.

In pursuance of our purpose of illustrating this narrative as much as possible in the very words of Scott, we quote from his Diary :—

"*20th January 1826.*—Sir William Forbes called, —the same kind, honest friend as ever, with all offers of assistance, &c., &c."

"*26th January 1826.*—Sir William Forbes took the chair [at a meeting of creditors], and behaved as he has ever done, with the generosity of ancient faith

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and early friendship. They [Sir William Forbes & Co.'s Banking House] are deeper concerned than most. In what scenes have Sir William and I not borne share together, desperate and almost bloody affrays, rivalries, deep drinking matches, and finally, with the kindest feelings on both sides, somewhat separated by his retiring within the bosom of his family, and I moving little beyond mine. It is fated our planets should cross, though, and that at the periods most interesting to me—Down—down—a hundred thoughts.”

Yes, a hundred thoughts, thoughts that took him back thirty years of his life, to the marriage of his friend, and to the memorable years that preceded it.

“*6th November 1827.*—Sir William Forbes came in before dinner to me, high-spirited, noble fellow as ever, and true to his friend.”

When Sir William Forbes died, Scott thus writes to Sir Alexander Wood :—

“Your letter brought me the affecting intelligence of the death of our early and beloved friend, Sir William. I had little else to expect from the state of health in which I last saw him, but that circumstance does not diminish the pain with which I now reflect that I shall never see him more. He was a man who, from his habits, could not be intimately known

to many, although everything that he did partook of that high feeling and generosity which belong perhaps to a better age than that we live in. In him I feel I have sustained a loss which no after-years of my life can fill up to me. Our early friendship none knew better than you, and you also well know that, if I look to the gay and happy hours of youth, they must be filled up with recollections of departed friends. In the whole course of life our friendship has been uninterrupted, as his kindness has been unwearied. Even the last time I saw him (so changed from what we knew him), he came to town when he was fitter to have kept his room, merely because he could be of service to some affairs of mine."

To Lockhart, with reference to the same event, Scott writes :—

"I have a sad affliction in the death of poor Sir William Forbes. You loved him well, I know, but it is impossible that you should enter into all my feelings on the occasion. My heart bleeds for his children. God help all !"

Very tender, no doubt, were his thoughts of the children of his early love. To him nothing that concerned them could be altogether a matter of indifference ;—and one can well imagine him often

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repeating with the amiable Elia, in his "Dream Children," that sentence which says so little and yet is so pregnant with pathetic meaning to the understanding heart: "And Alice's children call Bartram father."

## CHAPTER VIII

### EFFECT ON LIFE AND CHARACTER

WE have already remarked that his long attachment had, at the time, a steady and beneficial influence upon Scott's character, and there is little doubt that, as in his writings, so in the whole of his after-life, his early disappointment had a far-reaching effect.

The master-passion of love affects men differently, according to the depths of their natures and the character of their dispositions. In common natures, love unreturned soon dies for want of nourishment. Where, however, it finds an instrument, rich, full, and responsive to its master touch, ringing out with infinite variety the changes in hope and joy, doubt and despair, the effects are life-lasting. They differ, however, in kind and degree. Unrequited love will render some men sour and morose. In others, where the germs of vicious inclinations counterbalance the tendency to good, it will likely lead to moral degrada-



tion. But in a nature like that of Scott, endowed with noble and generous instincts, and where, despite the weaknesses and inconsistencies to which all are more or less liable, the natural feelings are gentle, pure, and good, the results of what becomes a kind of religion of the heart, even though saddening, are in the long run purifying, elevating, and humanising. It tends to sweeten the whole life and character. The sympathies are widened, and a tenderness for the feelings and sufferings of others comes to him who has known so well in its severest form what mental suffering can be. The very intensity of that sorrow, even when its freshness has passed away, will mitigate the smaller griefs and annoyances of life. Like Aaron's rod, it swallows up the rest. No other misfortune can ever seem to equal or come within a comparable degree of this the greatest and most endurable of passion's sorrow, so that all the rest appear so insignificant that the mind almost refuses to dwell upon them. It flies to the greater grief, and, strange to say, finds in it as it were a consolation, as well as an armour, against the darts of fate that otherwise might be troublesome enough.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "I remember hearing that Mandrin testified some horror when he found himself bound alive on the wheel, and saw an executioner approach with a bar of iron to break his limbs.

Of the peculiar sweetness and tenderness of Scott's nature there is abundant evidence. The irritability of his early manhood, noticed in a friend's letter already quoted, the idea of which, however, we think, was a great exaggeration, disappeared. If any trace of it were left, it was only when cant met him face to face, or when in politics he, a red-hot Tory, had to run counter to an opposition that he would probably consider as but cant of another species. But even in this latter respect he tutored his feelings; and those friends with whom the conscientious but strong expression of his views at one time caused a coolness, all came back to him with renewed warmth and affection.

As to the influence of Scott's great disappointment upon the character of his writings, something may be said. That to this early passion we owe many of the tenderest passages in his poems, is certainly true. Keble goes further, in thinking that it was the imaginative regret haunting Scott all his life which became

After the second and third blow he fell a-laughing, and, being asked the reason by his confessor, said he laughed at his own folly, which had anticipated increased agony at every blow, when it was obvious that the *first* must have jarred and confounded the system of the nerves so much as to render the succeeding blows of little consequence. I suppose it is so with the moral feelings."—*Diary*.

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the true well-spring of his inspiration in all his minstrelsy and romance. Purity and elevation in his conceptions of female character, says Shairp, well accord with such an experience idealised. One instance more of the truth of the old saying that "poets—

"Learn in suffering what they teach in song."

"His conception of purity in woman," says Ruskin, "is even higher than Dante's; his reverence for the filial relation as deep as Virgil's; his sympathy universal; there is no rank or condition of men of which he has not shown the loveliest aspect; his code of moral principles is entirely defined, yet taught with a reserved subtlety like nature's own, so that none but the most earnest readers perceive his intention; and his opinions on all practical subjects are final; the consummate decisions of accurate and inevitable common sense, tempered by the most graceful kindness."

And yet, although it is doubtless quite true that we owe many of the tenderest passages Scott has written to the influence of this early affection, it will not be found that it led to any special tendency to make love as a passion an engrossing theme in his poems or romances. The contrary, in fact, is usually the case,

The universality of love between the sexes from the sentimental point of view—its strange interweaving, in some form or another, in the life of nearly every individual—has led to the general acceptance of the fact that no novel or romance is complete without some thread of that passion running through, or being incidental to it. We see this even in the religious novel—so strong is the feeling of the necessity of introducing some human interest that appeals to all, old or young, pious or indifferent. No man would recognise this more fully than Scott, and hence we find that love affairs are by him introduced, yet we shall see that, though this is the case, they are, as a rule, incidental only, and but little dwelt upon.

Every intelligent reader of Scott's works cannot fail to notice that the growth of passion, its varying moods of hope, doubt, and despair, are referred to sparingly. The tender intercourse of lovers, and even that trifling or playing with love that we call flirtation, are mostly conspicuous by their absence, and even where introduced are hurried over and dismissed as quickly as possible, and in almost an impatient manner. Like the child who finds it highly desirable to label its hieroglyphic drawings with "This is a house," "This is a cow," etc., Scott seems to say, "These are lovers," and passes on; and whatever tender pas-

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sages are to be found in his writings are mostly impersonal.

A striking illustration of this is contained in his first poem, the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. After describing how—

“The knight and lady fair are met,  
And under the hawthorn's boughs are set,”

the Minstrel continues—

“And now, fair dames, methinks I see  
You listen to my minstrelsy:  
Your waving locks ye backward throw,  
And sidelong bend your necks of snow;  
Ye ween to hear a melting tale  
Of two true lovers in a dale;  
And how the knight, with tender fire,  
To paint his faithful passion strove;  
Swore he might at her feet expire,  
But never, never cease to love;  
And how she blushed, and how she sighed,  
And, half consenting, half denied,  
And said that she would die a maid;—  
Yet, might the bloody feud be stayed,  
Henry of Cranstoun, and only he,  
Margaret of Branksome's choice would be.

“Alas! fair dames, your hopes are vain!  
My harp has lost the enchanting strain;  
Its lightness would my age reprove:  
My hairs are grey, my limbs are old,  
My heart is dead, my veins are cold:  
I may not, durst not, sing of love.”

Previously he had sung of love in the impersonal way, thus :—

“ True love’s the gift which God has given  
To man alone beneath the heaven :  
It is not fantasy’s hot fire,  
Whose wishes soon as granted fly ;  
It liveth not in fierce desire,  
With dead desire it doth not die.  
It is the secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,  
The body and the soul doth bind.”

But later on the venerable Harper seems to have repented him of his reticence, for he bursts forth in the following strain :—

“ And said I that my limbs were old,  
And said I that my blood was cold,  
And that my kindly fire was fled,  
And my poor withered heart was dead,  
And that I might not sing of Love?—  
How could I to the dearest theme  
That ever warmed a minstrel’s dream  
So foul, so false a recreant prove !  
How could I name Love’s very name,  
Nor wake my heart to notes of flame !

“ In peace, Love tunes the shepherd’s reed ;  
In war, he mounts the warrior’s steed ;  
In halls, in gay attire is seen ;  
In hamlet, dances on the green.  
Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,  
And men below, and saints above ;  
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.”

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Any expectation that might be raised by such an eloquent outburst is, however, doomed to disappointment, for the only further opportunity the Minstrel gives himself of carrying out the implied promise is thus curtly dismissed :—

“ Needs not to tell each tender word  
’Twixt Margaret and ’twixt Cranstoun’s lord ;  
Nor how she told of former woes,  
And how her bosom fell and rose  
While he and Musgrave bandied blows ;  
Needs not these lovers’ joys to tell :  
One day, fair maids, you’ll know them well.”

Ruskin, dealing with the feature of Sir Walter’s works upon which we have been commenting, draws from it a conclusion which we venture to think is quite erroneous. The critic was unacquainted with the revelations which the full publication of Scott’s Diary alone could have given him, and which throw a strong light upon the question at issue ; and this must be borne in mind when reading his remarks. He says : “ Neither let it be thought for an instant that the slight and somewhat scornful glance with which Scott passes over scenes which a novelist of our day would have analysed with the air of a philosopher, and painted with the curiosity of a gossip, indicates any absence in his heart of sympathy with the great and sacred elements of personal

happiness. An era like ours, which has with diligence and ostentation swept its heart clear of all the passions once known as loyalty, patriotism, and piety, necessarily magnifies the apparent force of the one remaining sentiment which sighs through the barren chambers, or clings inextricably round the chasms of ruin ; nor can we but regard with awe the unconquerable spirit which still tempts or betrays the sagacities of selfishness into error or frenzy which is believed to be love. That Scott was never himself, in the sense of the phrase as employed by lovers of the Parisian school, *ivre d'amour*, may be admitted without prejudice to his sensibility, and that he never knew *l'amor che move 'l sol e l'altre stelle* was the chief, though unrecognised, calamity of his deeply checkered life."

Mr. Andrew Lang expresses his disagreement, and rightly, as we think, with this last conclusion. He remarks : " It is necessary to differ from Mr. Ruskin when he says that Scott never knew *l'amor che move 'l sol e l'altre stelle*. He whose heart was 'broken for two years, and retained its crack till his dying day,' he who, when old and tried and near his death, was yet moved by the memory of the name which, thirty years before, he had cut in Runic characters in the turf at the Castle gate of St. Andrews, knew love too



well to write of it much. He had won his ideal as alone an ideal can be won; he never lost her; she was with him always, because she had been unattainable. 'There are few,' he says, 'who have not, at one period of life, broken ties of love and friendship, secret disappointments of the heart, to mourn over.' . . . He could not be ever eager to recall them, he who had so bitterly endured them, and because he had known, and always did know, *l'amor che move 'l sol e l'altre stelle*, a seal was on his lips—a silence only broken by a kiss of Di Vernon's."<sup>1</sup>

An additional reason for this reticence may be due to a national characteristic of Scott's countrymen, and in which he shared,—a characteristic that errs on one side just as much as southern temperaments err in the opposite extreme. While the Scotchman may feel as deeply, and perhaps more deeply, the ties that bind him to his nearest and dearest, it is not in his nature to give much vent to his feelings, either by words or external manifestations. Lockhart himself remarks, as may be remembered, upon Scott's habitual effort to repress, so far as words were concerned, the more tender feelings which were in no heart deeper than in his, and that for the least chill

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

in the affections of any near and dear to him he had all the sensitiveness of a maiden.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Byron, he could never have dissected his heart and pinned the results on his sleeve "for daws to peck at." In a letter to Lady Abercorn, written at the time he was occupied with the *Lady of the Lake*, Scott confessed that, in spite of his own experience, he could not draw a lover; and in a letter of much later date, addressed to the Countess of Purgstall (his old friend, Miss Cranstoun), he said: "If I were either greedy or jealous of poetical fame,—and both are strangers to my nature,—I might comfort myself with the thought that I would hesitate to strip myself to the contest so fearlessly as Byron does; or to command the wonder and terror of the public by exhibiting in my own person the sublime attitude of the dying gladiator."

The influence of Scott's disappointment in giving a tinge of sadness to his poetry is to be noted.

<sup>1</sup> "This morning Lockhart and Sophia left us early and without leave-taking; when I rose at eight o'clock they were *gone*. This was very right. I hate red eyes and blowing of noses. *Agere et pati Romanum est*. Of all schools commend me to the Stoics. We cannot, indeed, overcome our affections, nor ought if we could; but we may repress them within due bounds, and avoid coaxing them to make fools of those who should be their masters."

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"Other great masters," says Ruskin, "are pathetic in a resolute and predetermined way, when they choose ; but, in their own minds, are evidently stern, or hopeful, or serious ; never really melancholy. Even Byron is rather sulky and desperate than melancholy ; Keats is sad because he is sickly ; Shelley, because he is impious ; but Scott is inherently and consistently sad. Around all his power and brightness, and enjoyment of eye and heart, the far-away Æolian knell is for ever sounding ; there is not one of those loving or laughing glances of his but is brighter for the film of tears ; his mind is like one of his own hill rivers,—it is white, and flashes in the sun fairly, carelessly, as it seems, and hastily in its going, but—

‘ Far beneath, where slow they creep,  
From pool to eddy, dark and deep,  
Where alders moist and willows weep;  
You hear her streams repine.’

Life begins to pass from him very early ; and while Homer sings cheerfully in his blindness, and Dante retains his courage and rejoices in hope of Paradise through all his exile, Scott, yet hardly past his youth, lies pensive in the sweet sunshine, and among the harvest of his native hills."

"Blackford, on whose uncultured breast,  
Among the broom, the thorn, and whin,

A truant boy, I sought the nest,  
 Or listed as I lay at rest,  
 While rose on breezes thin  
 The murmur of the city crowd,  
 And from the steeple jangling loud,  
 St. Giles's mingling din!  
 Now from the summit to the plain  
 Waves all the hill with yellow grain;  
 And on the landscape, as I look,  
 Nought do I see unchanged remain,  
 Save the rude cliffs and churning brook;  
 To me they make a heavy moan  
 Of early friendships past and gone."

Quotations in illustration of this vein of sadness running through Scott's poetry are not wanting. We will confine ourselves to two. The first is a beautiful variation of the feeling that dictated the previous lines:—

'The sun upon the Weirclaw Hill,  
 In Ettrick's vale, is sinking sweet;  
 The westland wind is hush and still,  
 The lake lies sleeping at my feet.  
 Yet not the landscape to mine eye  
 Bears those bright hues that once it bore;  
 Though evening, with her richest dye,  
 Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

"With listless look, along the plain  
 I see Tweed's silver current glide,  
 And coldly mark the holy fane  
 Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.

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The quiet lake, the balmy air,  
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree,—  
Are they still such as once they were?  
Or is the dreary change in me?

“Alas! the warped and broken board,  
How can it bear the painter's dye?  
The harp of strained and tuneless chord,  
How to the minstrel's skill reply?  
To aching eyes each landscape lowers,  
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill;  
And Araby's or Eden's bowers  
Were barren as this moorland hill.”<sup>1</sup>

The other quotation is from a poem entitled *The Return to Ulster*—a poem illustrated, as so many of his works are, by feelings “resulting from his own experience :—

“Alas! my poor bosom, and why shouldst thou burn?  
With the scenes of my youth can its raptures return?  
Can I live the dear life of illusions again,  
That flowed when its echoes first mixed with my strain?

---

<sup>1</sup> “I felt excited during the chase, but the feeling was but momentary. My mind was immediately turned to other remembrances, and to pondering upon the change which had taken place in my own feelings. The day was positively heavenly, and the wild hillside, with our little party, was beautiful to look at. Yet I felt like a man come from the dead, looking with indifference on that which interested him while living. So it must be—

‘When once life's day is near the gloaming.’”

—*Diary.*

“But was she, too, a phantom, the maid who stood by  
And listed my lay, while she turned from my eye?  
Was she, too, a vision, just glancing to view,  
Then dispersed in the sunbeam, or melted in dew?  
Oh! would it had been so!—Oh! would that her eye  
Had been but a star-glance that shot from the sky,  
And her voice, that was moulded to melody’s thrill,  
Had been but a zephyr that sighed and was still!

“Oh! would it had been so!—not then my poor heart  
Had learned the sad lesson, to love and to part;  
To bear, unassisted, its burden of care,  
While I toiled for the wealth I had no one to share.  
Not then had I said, when life’s summer was done,  
And the hours of her autumn were fast speeding on,  
‘Take the fame and the riches ye brought in your train,  
And return me the dream of my spring-tide again.’”

## CHAPTER IX

### THE TWO YEARS FOLLOWING HIS DISAPPOINTMENT

It is necessary now to turn to the two years that followed the death-blow dealt at Scott's hopes and aspirations, a period to him of the greatest anguish. "Heartbroken," with all that that means, is his own term. The stern realities of life had to be confronted, and Scott returned to Edinburgh, to face the world with a smile on his face, although his heart was torn with anguish. His concealment of sad feelings, and the assumption of the appearance of good spirits, especially in the family circle, were some of the characteristic ways in which the tenderness of his fine nature showed itself. In him it was combined with fortitude of heart, a practical, unselfish wisdom, and a dogged determination, come what would, to do his duty. Witness his Diary :—

"Something of the black dog still hanging about me; but I will shake him off. I generally affect

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good spirits in company of my family, whether I am enjoying them or not. It is too severe to sadden the harmless mirth of others by suffering your own causeless melancholy to be seen, and this species of exertion is, like virtue, its own reward ; for the good spirits which are at first simulated become at length real."

("This entry," says Lockhart, "paints the man in his tenderness, his fortitude, and happy wisdom.")

Or, again—

"If God bear with the worst of us, we may surely endure each other. If thrown into society, I always have and always endeavour to bring pleasure with me, at least to show willingness to please."

And again—

"Better news of Walter [his eldest son], but my heart is heavy on the subject. I went on with my history, however, for the point in this world is to do what we ought and bear what we must."

It heightens the pathos of these remarks when we reflect that they were written in his old age, after the death of his wife and the disastrous wreck of his fortunes ; when the body was suffering, and the brain was overtaxed to produce literary works, the proceeds of which were in his view to redeem his name and honour.



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The haunting misery of the two years that followed his last visit to Invermay was both alleviated and deepened by a special characteristic of his inner life, thus revealed in his Diary thirty years afterwards:—

“My life, though not without its fits of working and of strong exertion, has been a sort of dream spent in

‘Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.’

I have worn a wishing-cap, the power of which has been to divert present griefs by a touch of the wand of imagination, and gild over the future prospect by prospects even more fair than can ever be realised. . . . Since I was five years old, I cannot remember the time when I had not some ideal part to play for my own solitary amusement.”

And again—

“The love of solitude was with me a passion of early youth; when in my teens I used to fly from company to indulge in visions and airy castles of my own, the disposal of ideal wealth, and the exercise of imaginary power. This feeling prevailed even when I was eighteen, when love and ambition awakening with other passions threw me more into society, from which I have, however, at times withdrawn myself, and have always been even glad to do so.”

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Scott, it will thus be seen, led a dual life—one real, the other ideal. There are few of woman born that do not more or less do the same. To youth is generally ascribed the power of dreaming of love and happiness, fame and riches ; but, as the boy is father to the man, it is probable that the same power and its exercise continue to exist, in a gradually lessening and circumscribed degree, till the curtain is finally lowered upon the last scene of the drama of life. Man never is, but always to be, blest ; and if hope of some kind, with its fairy imaginings, fades out of existence—if it ever can do so entirely—the state of mind of the individual will become such that reason must sooner or later give way.

A foretaste of such madness—there is no other word for it—is felt in a case like that of Scott. A strong, deep, and tender nature such as his, shaken to its very foundations by contending emotions, becomes an all-powerful instrument of self-torture. The mind is possessed by the one dominating train of ideas. Morning, noon, and night it is present, throbbing through the brain and pressing upon the heart with a dull, sinking sensation that becomes almost unendurable, and to which even a stormy outburst is at times a welcome relief. All attempts, however resolute, to banish it are vain—the pendulum swings back again

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remorselessly. Society and amusements do not drown it. Then it is like a deep bass note on an organ accompanying what is going on—a note so low as to be scarcely audible to the ear, while yet the slow, deliberate vibrations of the air thus set in motion cause every nerve of the body to tremble and to respond in unison. Our own familiar ones do not hear it, nor does the visage betray to them the working of the afflicted heart.

“Why should we faint, and fear to live alone,  
Since all alone, so Heaven has willed, we die?  
Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,  
Knows half the reason why we smile or sigh.  
Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe,  
The hermit spirits dwell and range apart;  
Our eyes see all around, in gloom or glow,  
Hues of their own, fresh borrowed from the heart.”<sup>1</sup>

There is truth in the saying that nowhere can one be so alone as in a crowd, for the inner life of the being stricken like Scott is of all lives the most solitary; its grief and sorrow are too sacred for utterance. When the time, if ever, does arrive that

<sup>1</sup> “What a strange scene if the surge of conversation could suddenly ebb like the tide, and show us the state of people's real minds!—

‘No eyes the rocks discover  
Which lurk beneath the deep.’

Life could not be endured were it seen in reality.”—*Diary*.

## Two Years following Disappointment 109

the past passion can be talked about, a sure indication is given that the volcano is extinguished, the dead ashes of the spent fire alone remaining to show where once it was.

Very strange, too, is the power that can make almost every object that meets the view form food for the possession that takes firm hold of its victim. In the fields and woods, the streets and busy haunts of men, the home and its domestic scenes, every thing and every incident can become a link that brings to mind some aspect of the all-absorbing, ever-present passion.<sup>1</sup> The excited brain passes all the past

<sup>1</sup> "I endeavoured forcibly to abstract my mind from the singular circumstances in which I was placed. Feelings which I had gallantly combatted while the exciting object was remote, were now exasperated by my immediate neighbourhood to her whom I was so soon to part with for ever. Her name was written in every book which I attempted to peruse; and her image forced itself in whatever train of thought I strove to engage myself. It was like the officious slave of Prior's *Solomon*—

'Abra was ready ere I named her name,  
And when I called another, Abra came.'

I alternately gave way to these thoughts and struggled against them, sometimes yielding to a mood of melting tenderness of sorrow which was scarce natural to me, sometimes arming myself with the hurt pride of one who had experienced what he esteemed unmerited rejection. I paced the library until I had chafed myself into a temporary fever. I then threw myself on the couch and endeavoured to dispose myself to sleep; but it was in vain that I used every effort to compose

under review a thousand times. Every scene is acted and re-acted as it happened, or as it might have happened if something else had been said or done, or left unsaid or undone. Auspicious moments missed, opportunities lost or neglected, or mourned over in the vain wish that they would come again, and in the fruitless belief that, rightly availed of, they would have contributed to a happier result. Each little kindness or approach to tenderness on the part of the beloved one is lingered over in turn, that its exquisite sweetness may be tasted over and over by the tongue of recollection. And fancy has a trick of simulating to itself the overcoming of

myself—that I lay without movement of finger or of muscle, as still as if I had been already a corpse—that I endeavoured to divert or banish disquieting thoughts by fixing my mind on some act of repetition or arithmetical process. My blood throbbed, to my feverish apprehension, in pulsations which resembled the deep and regular strokes of the distant fulling-mill, and tingled in my veins like streams of liquid fire.

“At length I arose, opened the window, and stood by it for some time in the clear moonlight, receiving, in part at least, that refreshment and dissipation of ideas from the clear and calm scene, without which they had become beyond the command of my own volition. I resumed my place on the couch—with a heart, Heaven knows, not lighter but firmer, and more resolved for endurance. In a short time slumber crept over my senses ; still, however, though my senses slumbered, my soul was awake to the painful feelings of my situation, and my dreams were of mental anguish and external objects of terror.”—*Rob Roy*.

## Two Years following Disappointment 111

obstacles it knows so well can never be overcome, the triumph of love where such triumph is impossible, and the consequent scenes of supreme happiness—a happiness tinged, however, by an undercurrent of sadness at the unreality that cannot be entirely banished from the mind. Very sweet, notwithstanding, is the “might have been,” in which all doubts and misunderstandings are cleared away, and imaginary pictures are conjured up with a yearning tenderness of feeling that perhaps surpasses anything that exists in real life.<sup>1</sup>

Reason is not altogether absent from the general conflict. It asserts its sway, and points out the weakness, folly, and uselessness of thus dwelling upon an irretrievable past, and the stern necessity of bracing up the resolution to a new life, in which painful remembrance shall be shut out by an effort of the will. Anathemas upon himself are heaped by the unfortunate individual; and there are times when he feels strong, and even wonders he could have given way to such insensate, futile sentimentalism, and when a calming sensation of relief is felt, only, how-

<sup>1</sup> “I have worn a wishing-cap, the power of which has been to divert present griefs by a touch of the wand of imagination, and gild over the future prospect by prospects more fair than can ever be realised.”—*Diary*.

ever, to be swiftly swept away, like a feeble straw, by a recurring wave of desolation.<sup>1</sup> Pity for self is felt, and a feeling that no man ever has or ever can have endured such sufferings; for the "ego," even in the most modest, is the strongest instinct implanted by nature in a human being.<sup>2</sup> Self-depreciation and a feeling of unworthiness will nevertheless at times prevail. The ideal being created or exalted by the romantic disposition has seldom any faults. If such can be found in her real person, it refuses to see them; for to admit their existence would be like committing treason before the very altar of love itself, so true is it that love endureth all things, and continues to the end.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Sometimes I feel as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the wave that breaks on it."—*Diary*.

<sup>2</sup> "My self-consciousness was heightened to that pitch of intensity in which our own emotions take the form of a drama which urges itself imperatively on our contemplation, and we begin to weep, less under the sense of our sufferings than at the thought of it. I felt a sort of pitying anguish over the pathos of my own lot: the lot of a being finely organised for pain, but with hardly any fibres that responded to pleasure—to whom the idea of future evil robbed the present of its joy, and for whom the idea of future good did not still the uneasiness of a present yearning or a present dread. I went dumbly through that stage of a poet's suffering in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows."—*George Eliot*.

<sup>3</sup> "Imagination, dwelling on an absent object of affection, paints her not only in the fairest light, but in that in which we most desire to behold her."—*Rob Roy*.

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At times the desire for death, or, at any rate, the willingness to die, is strong, partly to be rid of a torture so unbearable, and that seems to-day what it was yesterday, and will be to-morrow even as to-day, and to be never-ending, and partly in the longing hope that such a fate would fill with sorrow the breast of the cruel fair one, and would bring a tear to her eye, and to her heart a feeling, if not of love, at any rate of kindness for the unfortunate victim.

And so the conflict rages, every chord of the heart vibrating with ever-varying contending emotions through weary days and weary nights of pain, restlessness, and tears—for weeping is not confined to the gentler sex; only in the man it is less facile of vent, and, though perhaps more violent, is, for very shame at its unmanliness, the more carefully concealed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "At length tears rushed to my eyes, glazed as they were by the exertion of straining after that which was no longer to be seen. I wiped them mechanically, and almost without being aware they were flowing—but they came thicker and thicker; I felt a tightening of the throat and breast, the *hysterica passio* of poor Lear; and, sitting down by the wayside, I shed a flood of the first and most bitter tears which had flowed from my eyes since childhood."—*Rob Roy*.

"With me the hysterical passion which impels tears is of a terrible violence—a sort of throttling sensation—then succeeded by a state of dreaming stupidity."—*Diary*.



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It is fortunately in the nature of things that the storm induced by a passionate and unfortunate attachment cannot last for ever. It has its ebbings and its flowings, its deeps and its shallows, but in time it calms down, and though it may frequently be stirred up again, as events that revive recollection occur, each succeeding tempest becomes less and less violent, and the wreck of past feelings lies stranded on the shore of memory, not entirely to disappear from view, and never to be thought of without the saddest and deepest regret, yet without greatly disturbing the main current of a man's life.<sup>1</sup> So it was with Scott. Thirty-

<sup>1</sup> "When they reached the Green Room, as it was called, Oldbuck placed the candle on the toilet-table, before a huge mirror with a black japanned frame, surrounded by dressing-boxes of the same, and looked around him with something of a disturbed expression of countenance. 'I am seldom in this apartment,' he said, 'and never without yielding to a melancholy feeling—not, of course, on account of the childish nonsense that Grizel was telling you, but owing to circumstances of an early and unhappy attachment. It is at such moments as these, Mr. Lovel, that we feel the changes of time. The same objects are before us—those inanimate things which we have gazed on in wayward infancy and impetuous youth, in anxious and scheming manhood—they are permanent and the same; but when we look upon them in cold, unfeeling old age, can we, changed in our temper, our pursuits, our feelings—changed in our form, our limbs, and our strength—can we be ourselves called the same? or do we not rather look back with a sort of wonder upon our former selves as beings separate and distinct from what we now are? The philosopher who appealed from Philip inflamed

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five years after, in his Diary he says: "I have had unhappy days—unhappy weeks—even, on one or two occasions, unhappy months; but Fortune's finger has never been able to play a dirge on me for a quarter of a year together."

As Scott himself says, the influence of a violent emotion cannot be stopped or forced back, but it may be diverted into a different channel.<sup>1</sup> Life, its with wine to Philip in his hours of sobriety, did not choose a judge so different as if he had appealed from Philip in his youth to Philip in his old age. I cannot but be touched with the feeling so beautifully expressed in a poem which I have heard repeated :—

"My eyes are dim<sup>d</sup> with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred,  
For the same sound is in my ears  
Which in those days I heard.

"Thus fares it still in our decay;  
And yet the wiser mind  
Mourns less for what time takes away,  
Than what he leaves behind."

Well, time cures every wound; and though the scar may remain and occasionally ache, yet the earliest agony of its recent infliction is felt no more.'"—*The Antiquary*.

<sup>1</sup> "What strange beings we are! The serious duties I have on hand cannot divert my mind from the most melancholy thoughts; and yet the talking with these workmen, and the trifling occupation which they give me, serves to dissipate my attention. The truth is, I fancy, that a body under the impulse of violent emotion cannot be stopped or forced back, but may indirectly be urged into a different channel."—*Diary*.

duties and occupations, gradually claim and get a larger and larger share of the thoughts; and, though a light may have passed out of life for ever, and the full capacity for joy be dulled, still, for the individual healthy in mind and body, there are interests and even pleasures that after a time make life endurable and worth living. The natural instinct of the right-thinking man for a fireside of his own, and dear ones to protect and cherish, is one very hard to die out entirely; and the very best anodyne, when it comes naturally, is a new, successful, and happy affection. It can never be like the old, supreme, romantic one, but it may be real and earnest, and, though comparatively sober, a good practical working substitute. Happily this was so in Scott's case; and the possibility of the continued existence of the memory of the ideal passion as a fond dream, without lessening or detracting from, or being in any way a disloyalty to the ties thus formed, is a distinctive feature in his history. It is more common than many suppose, for the reason that ordinarily the former attachment is a sacred secret of the inner heart that is seldom or never revealed. Scott's own future in this respect is only another exemplification, and a striking one, of what he so well says in *Redgauntlet*, in the passages quoted in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER X

### MARRIAGE

It is not our intention to narrate in this place the history of Scott's second and more prosaic love affair. Those who desire to compare it with his first, may read elsewhere<sup>1</sup> the account given by Lockhart.<sup>1</sup> He wooed and married Miss Margaret Charlotte Carpenter, and for nearly thirty years she was his faithful and affectionate wife.

The portrait that we give of Lady Scott is taken from a picture painted eight years after her marriage. It is probable that the attractions of her face, its vivacity and changeful expression, were such as to escape being fixed on canvas. Lockhart says that, "without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions; a form that was fashioned as light as a fay's; a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep-set, and

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

dazzling, of the finest Italian brown ; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing ; her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty young Englishwoman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain natural archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompaniment of a French accent. A lovelier vision, as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined."

We may feel assured that, as an honourable man, Scott made no concealment to the lady of his previous unfortunate attachment, and one of his letters to her, which Lockhart did not publish, would indicate that the subject had been discussed in several conversations with her. That letter runs thus :—

"You seem, too, to doubt the strength, or at least the stability of my affection ; I can only protest to you most solemnly that a truer never warmed a mortal's breast, and that, though it may appear sudden, it is not rashly adopted. You yourself must allow that, from the nature of our acquaintance, we are entitled to judge more absolutely of each other, than from a much longer one trammelled with the usual forms of life ;<sup>1</sup> and though I have been re-

<sup>1</sup> To his mother he wrote : " Though my acquaintance with the young lady has not been of long standing, this circumstance

peatedly in similar situations with amiable and accomplished women, the feelings I entertain for you have ever been strangers to my bosom, *except during a period I have often alluded to. . . .* I would fain make you laugh before concluding, but my heart is too full for trifling. Adieu, adieu. *Souvenez-vous de moi.*—W. SCOTT."

A further indirect allusion is made to the matter in a previous letter, in which he explained his position and expectations.

"I likewise wish to enter into the circumstances of my situation, which I should most heartily despise myself were I capable of concealing or misrepresenting to you. Being only the second brother of a large family, you will easily conceive that, though my father is a man in easy circumstances, my success in

is in some degree counterbalanced by the intimacy in which we have lived, and by the opportunities which that intimacy has afforded me of remarking her conduct and sentiments on many different occasions, some of which were rather of a delicate nature, so that, in fact, I have seen much more of her during the few weeks we have been together, than I could have done after a much longer acquaintance, shackled by the common forms of ordinary life. . . . Without flying into raptures, for I must assure you that my judgment as well as my affections are consulted upon this occasion—without flying into raptures, then, I may safely assure you, that her temper is sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and, what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious."

life must depend upon my own exertions. This I have always been taught to expect, and, far from considering it as a hardship, my feelings on that subject have ever been those of confidence in myself.

*"Hitherto, from reasons which have long thrown a lassitude over my mind, my professional exertions have been culpably neglected, and, as I reside with my father, I gave myself little trouble, provided my private income did but answer my personal expenses and the maintenance of a horse or two. At the same time, none of those who were called to the Bar with myself can boast of having very far outstripped me in the career of life or of business."*

After referring to his expectations of the Sheriffdom which afterwards came to him, he concludes: "Many other little resources [probably literary], which I cannot easily explain so as to make you comprehend me, induce me to express myself with confidence upon the probability of success; and oh, how dear those prospects will become to me, would my beloved friend but permit me to think that she would share them!"

After the harsh measures dealt out to him by fate at the end of his Jacob-like servitude of seven years, it is comforting to know there was in store for Scott a long period of real and, with the exception of th

death of his firstborn, of almost unalloyed happiness and prosperity, something to look back upon, as he did look back upon it, with a spirit of thankfulness when the great catastrophe arrived that clouded the latter years of his life and wore him into his grave. Lady Scott, as judged by outsiders, was not the ideal wife they would have chosen for the future poet and novelist ; and it is probable that she did not possess that cast of mind that could rise to the full appreciation of his genius, and give him that intellectual companionship which an idealist would have considered desirable. As Johnson remarks, "there are many qualities which contribute to domestic happiness upon which poetry has no colours to bestow," and that his wife possessed these in a higher degree than mere acquaintances suspected, is evident on the best of all testimony, that of Scott himself, as will appear hereafter. His relations to her and to his family are thus described by Lockhart, and present to the reader about as pleasant a picture of family life and happiness as can be desired :—

"If ever the principle of kindness was incarnated in a mere man, it was in him. In the social relations of life, where men are most effectually tried, no spot can be detected in him. He was a patient, dutiful, reverent son ; a generous, compassionate, tender



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husband ; an honest, careful, and most affectionate father. Never was a more virtuous or a happier fireside than his. The influence of his mighty genius overshadowed it imperceptibly ; his calm good sense, and his angelic sweetness of heart and temper, regulated and softened a strict but paternal discipline. His children, as they grew up, understood by degrees the high privilege of their birth ; but the profoundest sense of his greatness never disturbed their confidence in his goodness. The buoyant play of his spirits made him sit young among the young ; parent and son seemed to live in brotherhood together ; and the chivalry of his imagination threw a certain air of courteous gallantry into his relations with his daughters which gave a very peculiar grace to the fondness of their intercourse. Though there could not be a gentler mother than Lady Scott, on those delicate occasions most interesting to young ladies they always made their father their first confidant.”<sup>1</sup>

Before passing on to a gloomier time in Scott's career, it is pleasing to look in upon him, through Lockart's eyes, in this time of his greatest happiness :

<sup>1</sup> “I parted from Scott with the feeling that all the world might admire him in his works, but that those only could learn to love him as he deserved, who had seen him at Abbotsford [viz. in the bosom of his family].”—*Thomas Moore*.

“In the summer of this year [the year after his marriage] he had hired a pretty cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, about six miles from Edinburgh. It is a small house, but with one room of good dimensions—which Mrs. Scott’s taste set off to advantage at humble cost—a paddock or two, and a garden (commanding a most beautiful view), in which Scott delighted to train his flowers and creepers. Never, I have heard him say, was he prouder of his handiwork than when he completed the fashioning of a rustic archway—now overgrown with hoary ivy—by way of ornament to the entrance from the Edinburgh road. In this retreat they spent some happy summers, receiving the visits of their few chosen friends from the neighbouring city, and wandering at will amidst some of the most romantic scenery that Scotland can boast. They had neighbours, too, who were not slow to cultivate their acquaintance. With the Clerks of Pennycuick, with Mackenzie the Man of Feeling, who then occupied the charming villa of Auchendinny, and with Lord Woodhouselee, Scott had from an earlier date been familiar; and it was while at Lasswade that he formed intimacies, even more important in their result, with the noble families of Melville and Buccleuch, both of whom have castles in the same valley.

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- ' Sweet are thy paths, O passing sweet,  
By Esk's fair streams that run,  
O'er airy steep, thro' copsewood deep,  
Impervious to the sun.
- ' From that fair dome, where suit is paid  
By blast of bugle free,<sup>1</sup>  
To Auchendinny's hazel shade,  
And haunted Woodhouselee.
- ' Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,  
And Roslin's rocky glen ;  
Dalkeith, which all the virtues love,  
And classic Hawthornden ?'

" Another verse reminds us that

' There the rapt poet's step may rove ;'

and it was amidst these delicious solitudes that he did produce the pieces which laid the imperishable foundations of all his fame. It was here that, when his warm heart was beating with young and happy love, and his whole mind and spirit were nerved by new motives for exertion—it was here that, in the ripened glow of manhood, he seems to have first felt something of his real strength, and poured himself out in those splendid original ballads which were at once to fix his name."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pennycuik.

<sup>2</sup> Of his residence at Ashestiel, where he removed from Lasswade for the summer season, Scott writes in his Diary: "Ashestiel looks worst, I think, at this period of the year ; but it is a beautiful place in the summer, where I spent nine happy years."

## CHAPTER XI

### DEATH OF LADY SCOTT

IN 1825 the financial thunder-cloud that had for some time threatened Scott, burst with overwhelming results, and, to add to his misfortunes, in less than six months, Lady Scott, whose feeble health had for some time past given him many an anxious moment, departed this life. After this event, in Ruskin's words, he never wrote glad word more.<sup>1</sup> How sincerely she was missed and mourned, the following passages from his Diary alone can tell, as alone they can reveal what she had been to him in the twenty-nine years of their married life :—

Alluding to her last illness, he says : " My dear wife, the partner of early cares and successes, is, I

<sup>1</sup> " *Woodstock* was finished 26th March 1826. He knew then of his ruin, and wrote in bitterness, but not in weakness. The closing pages are the most beautiful of the book. But a month afterwards Lady Scott died, and he never wrote glad word more."—*Ruskin*.

fear, frail in health—though I trust and pray she may see me out”; and just before the fatal termination that was expected, he, obliged to leave her and go to Edinburgh to fulfil his duties as one of the Clerks of the Courts of Justice, wrote thus: “I have seen plainly, within the last two months, that recovery was hopeless. And yet to part with the companion of twenty-nine years when so very ill—that I did not, could not, foresee. It withers my heart to think of it, and to recollect that I can hardly hope again to seek confidence and counsel from the ear to which all might be safely confided.”

Then, when all was over, he writes: “She died at nine in the morning, after being very ill for two days—easy at last.

“I arrived here late last night. Anne is worn out, and has had hysterics, which returned on my arrival. Her broken accents were like those of a child, the language as well as the tones, broken, but in the most gentle voice of submission. ‘Poor mamma—never return again—gone for ever—a better place.’ Then, when she came to herself, she spoke with sense, freedom, and strength of mind, till her weakness returned. It would have been inexpressibly moving to me as a stranger—what was it then to the father and the husband? For myself, I scarce know how I

feel, sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the wave that breaks on it.

“I am as alert at thinking and deciding as ever I was in my life. Yet when I contrast what this place now is with what it was not long since, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of my family—all but poor Anne—an impoverished and embarrassed man, I am deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels, who would always talk down my sense of the calamitous apprehensions which break the heart that must bear them alone. . . . I wonder how I shall do with the large portion of thoughts which were hers for thirty years. I suspect they will be hers for a long time, at least.”

*May 18, 1826.*—“Another day, and a bright one to the external world, again opens on us; the air soft, and the flowers smiling, and the leaves glittering. They cannot refresh her to whom mild weather was a natural enjoyment. Cerements of lead and wood already hold her; cold earth must have her soon. But it is not my Charlotte, it is not the bride of my youth, the mother of my children, that will be laid among the ruins of Dryburgh,<sup>1</sup> which we have so often visited in

<sup>1</sup> In one of his letters to Miss Carpenter, shortly before their marriage, Scott says: “When you go to the south of Scotland with me, you will see their burying-place, now all that remains

gaiety and pastime. No, no! She is sentient and conscious of my emotions somewhere—somehow; *where*, we cannot tell; *how*, we cannot tell; yet would I not at this moment renounce the mysterious yet certain hope that I shall see her in a better world, for all that this world can give me. The necessity of this separation—that necessity which rendered it even a relief—that and patience must be my comfort. I do not experience those paroxysms of grief which others do on the same occasion. I can exert myself and speak even cheerfully to the poor girls. But alone, or if anything touches me—the choking sensation! I have been to her room: there was no voice in it—no stirring; the pressure of the coffin was visible on the

with my father of a very handsome property. It is one of the most beautiful and romantic scenes you ever saw, among the ruins of an old abbey. When I die, Charlotte, you must cause my bones to be laid there; but we shall have many happy days before that, I hope. Farewell, my dear, *dear* Charlotte."

To this she answered: "What an idea of yours was that to mention where you wish to have your *bones laid*! If you were married, I should think you were tired of me. A very pretty compliment *before marriage*! I hope sincerely I shall not live to see that day. If you always have those cheerful thoughts, how very pleasant and gay you must be! Adieu, my dearest friend. Take care of yourself, if you love me, as I have no *wish* that you should *visit* that *beautiful* and *romantic* scene, the burying-ground. Adieu once more, and believe that you are loved sincerely by C. C."



LADY SCOTT





bed, but it had been removed elsewhere : all was neat as she loved it, but all was calm—calm as death. I remembered the last sight of her ; she raised herself in bed and tried to turn her eyes after me, and said, with a sort of a smile, ‘ You all have such melancholy faces.’ They were the last words I heard her utter, and I hurried away, for she did not seem quite conscious of what she said, When I returned, immediately before departing, she was in a deep sleep. It is deeper now. This was but seven days since.

“ They are arranging the chamber of death ; that which was long the apartment of connubial happiness, and of whose arrangements (better than in richer houses) she was so proud. They are treading fast and thick. For weeks you could have heard a footfall. Oh, my God ! ”

*May 23.*—“ About an hour before the mournful ceremony of yesterday, Walter arrived, having travelled express from Ireland on receiving the news. He was much affected, poor fellow, and no wonder. Poor Charlotte nursed him, and perhaps for that reason she was ever partial to him. The whole scene floats as a sort of dream before me—the beautiful day, the grey ruins covered and hidden among clouds of foliage and flourish, where the grave, even in the lap of beauty, lay lurking, and gaped for its prey. Then

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the grave looks, the hasty, important bustle of men with spades and mattocks—the train of carriages—the coffin containing the creature that was so long the dearest on earth to me, and whom I was to consign to the very spot which in pleasure parties we so frequently visited. It seems still as if this could not be really so. But it is so—and duty to God and to my children must teach me patience.”

*May 26.*—“Dull, drooping, cheerless, has this day been. I cared not to carry my own gloom to the girls, and so sat in my own room, dawdling with old papers, which awakened as many stings as if they had been a nest of fifty scorpions. Then the solitude seemed so absolute. My poor Charlotte would have been in my room half a score of times, to see if the fire burned, and to ask a hundred questions. Well, that is over, and, if it cannot be forgotten, must be remembered with patience.”

*May 27.*—“A sleepless night. It is time to be up and be doing, and a sleepless night sometimes furnishes good ideas. Alas! I have no companion now with whom I can communicate to relieve the loneliness of these watches of the night. But I must not fail myself and my family—and the necessity of exertion becomes apparent.”

*May 30.*—“This has been a melancholy day, most

melancholy. I am afraid poor Charles found me weeping, but with me the hysterical passion which impels tears is of a terrible violence—a sort of throttling sensation, then succeeded by a state of dreaming stupidity, in which I ask if my poor Charlotte can actually be dead. I think I feel my loss more than at the first.”

*June 4.*—“Well, but if I lay down my pen, as the pain in my breast hints that I should, what am I to do? If I think, why, I shall weep—and that’s nonsense; and I have no friend now—none—to receive my tediousness for half an hour in the gloaming.” •

*June 5.*—“After all, I have fagged through six pages [equal to twenty-six to thirty pages of print], and made poor Wurmser lay down his sword on the glacis of Mantua—and my head aches—my eyes ache—my back aches—so does my breast—and I am sure my heart aches, and what can Duty ask more?”

*June 7.*—“When I came home from such a business, I used to carry the news to poor Charlotte, who dressed her face in sadness or mirth as she saw the news affect me.”

*June 8.*—“Bilious and headache this morning—a dog howled all night, and left me little sleep. Poor cur! I daresay he has his distress as I have mine.

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I have often deserved a headache in my young days without having one, and Nature, I suppose, is paying off old scores. Ay, but then the want of the affectionate care that used to be ready, with lowered voice and stealthy pace, to smooth the pillow and offer condolence and assistance—gone—gone—for ever—ever—ever! Well, there is another world, and we'll meet free from the mortal sorrows and frailties that beset us here! Amen, so be it. Let me change the topic with hand and head, and the heart must follow."

*June 11.*—"Bad dreams about poor Charlotte. Woke thinking my old and inseparable friend beside me; and it was only when I was fully awake that I could persuade myself that she was dark, low, and distant, and that my bed was widowed."

*June 29.*—"So farewell now, poor No. 39 [his former house in Castle Street, Edinburgh]. What a portion of my time has been spent there! It has sheltered me from the prime of life to its decline; and now I must bid good-bye to it. I have bid good-bye to my poor wife, so long its courteous and kind mistress,—and I need not care about the empty rooms; yet it gives me a turn. I have been so long a citizen of Edinburgh, now an indweller only. Never mind; all in the day's work."

*July 14.*—"ABBOTSFORD.—Arrived here yesterday before five o'clock. Anyone would think, from the fal-de-ral conclusion of my journal yesterday, that I left town in a gay humour—*cujus contrarium verum est*. But Nature has given me a kind of buoyancy, I know not what to call it, that mingles even with my deepest afflictions and most gloomy hours. I have a secret pride—I fancy it will be so most truly termed—which impels me to mix with my distresses strange snatches of mirth which have no mirth in them. In fact, the journey hither, the absence of the affectionate friend that used to be my companion on the journey, and many mingled thoughts of bitterness, have given me a fit of the bile."

*July 21.*—"Feeling myself returned to that celibacy which renders many accommodations indifferent which lately were indispensable, my imagination drew a melancholy contrast between the young man entering the world on fire for fame, and the aged widower, *blasé* on the point of literary reputation, deprived of the social comforts of a married state, and looking back to regret instead of looking forward to hope. This brought bad sleep and unpleasant dreams. But if I cannot hope to be what I have been, I will not, if I can help it, suffer vain repining to make me worse than I may be."

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*August 17.*—"In the evening we had music from the girls, and the voice of the harp and the viol were heard in my halls once more, which have been so long deprived of mirth. It is with a mixed sensation I hear these sounds. I look on my children and am happy; and yet every now and then a pang shoots across my heart. It seems so strange that my poor wife should not be there. But enough of this."

*August 25.*—"God bless him [the young Duke of Buccleuch]. His father and I loved each other well, and his beautiful mother had as much of the angel as is permitted to walk this earth. I see the balcony from which they welcomed 'poor Charlotte and me,' long ere the ascent was surmounted, streaming out their white handkerchiefs from the battlements. There were *four* merry people that day—now one sad individual is all that remains."

*September 12.*—"As I slept for a few minutes in my chair, to which I am more addicted than I could wish, I heard, as I thought, my poor wife call me by the familiar name of fondness which she gave me. My recollections on waking were melancholy enough. These be—

'The airy tongues that syllable men's names.'

All, I believe, have some natural desire to consider

these unusual impressions as bodements of good or evil to come. But, alas! this is a prejudice of our own conceit. They are the empty echoes of what is past, not the foreboding voice of what is to come."

*October 11.*—"We are ingenious self-tormentors. This journey [to London] annoys me more than anything of the kind in my life. My wife's figure seems to stand before me, and her voice is in my ears, 'Scott, do not go.' It half frightens me.

"Strong throbbing at the heart, and a disposition to be very sick. It is just the effect of so many feelings which have been lulled to sleep by the uniformity of my life, but awaken on any new subject of agitation. Poor, poor Charlotte!! I cannot daub it further. I get incapable of arranging my papers, too. I will go out for half an hour. God relieve me!"

*November 10* [London, after a visit to Paris].—"The succession of new people and unusual incidents has had a favourable effect on my mind, which was becoming rutted, like an ill-kept highway. My thoughts have for some time flowed in another and pleasanter channel than through the melancholy course into which my solitary and deprived state had long driven them, and which gave often pain to be endured without complaint and without sympathy."



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*December 16.*—"Another bad night. I remember I used to think a slight illness was a luxurious thing. My pillow was then softened by the hand of affection, and all the little cares which were put in exercise to soothe the languor or pain were more flattering and pleasing than the consequences of the illness were disagreeable. It was a new sense to be watched and attended, and I used to think that the *malade imaginaire* gained something by his humour. It is different in the latter stages. The old post-chaise gets more shattered and out of order at every turn; windows will not be pulled up; doors refuse to open, or, being open, will not shut again—which last is rather my case. There is some new subject of complaint every moment; your sicknesses come thicker and thicker; your comforting or sympathising friends fewer and fewer, for why should they sorrow for the course of nature? The recollection of youth, health, and uninterrupted powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. The best is, the long halt will arrive at last, and cure all."

*April 3, 1828* [two years after Lady Scott's death].—"Set off at eight o'clock, and fought towards Carlisle—a sad place in my domestic remembrances, since here I married poor Charlotte. She is gone, and I am following, faster, perhaps, than I wot of.

It is something to have lived and loved; and our poor children are so hopeful and affectionate, that it chastens the sadness attending the thoughts of our separation."

At Carlisle, on the return journey, Miss Anne Scott, who accompanied her father, wrote to her sister, Mrs. Lockhart: "Early in the morning, before we started, papa took me with him to the Cathedral. This he had done often before; but he said he must stand once more on the spot where he married poor mamma."

Some of these extracts from the Diary will remind the reader of the stanzas so often quoted from *Marmion*:—

"Oh, woman, in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,  
And variable as the shade  
By the light quivering aspen made;  
When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou!"

These extracts from Sir Walter's Diary, so far as they relate to his wife's death, to his deep and affecting grief at his loss, and to his tender and affectionate memories of her, are more numerous, perhaps, than might be thought necessary. They have not been made without a purpose. It was somewhat the fashion for mere acquaintances and outsiders to

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depreciate Lady Scott, in a tone as if they had reason to commiserate Scott upon the connection; and it is only by a consideration of these passages that the kindly and sympathetic reader will see how far removed from the truth were the injudicious remarks published about her later on, after Scott himself had followed her to the land of silence. That she had her little foibles, is true,—who, even the best of men and women, has not?—and Scott recognised the fact, stating that even her very foibles were of service to him, by giving him things to think of beyond his weary self-reflections. While, perhaps, she was not a being of a high intellectual standard, and able to appreciate to its full extent his great genius, she was yet proud of her husband; proud of the solid benefits that his talents brought in; proud of the adulation that poured in upon him in no stinted measure from every quarter; and proud of his personal popularity. This was only natural and wifely; and if the evidence of this pride contrasted strongly with the modesty of Scott himself, and with his shrinking abhorrence of the slightest approach of fulsomeness in the flattery of others to which he was exposed, who can wonder? The foible was at least an amiable one, and could do no one any harm. The extracts from the Diary show better than any-

thing else could do, that she was the true helpmeet to her husband—faithful, tender, affectionate, and sympathetic; his comforter, consoler, companion, and dearest friend. Happy the man who can say that of his wife, even though she cannot describe the Binomial Theorem, discuss the Principia of Newton, or exhibit herself to the world as an example of intellectual strength. Better the qualities that wear well than those which only dazzle.

## CHAPTER XII

### SCOTT'S DUAL LIFE

A MAN whose regular occupation is the creation of fictitious characters and scenes, must necessarily live a great part of his waking life in a world of imagination.\* This was pre-eminently so in the case of Scott. Like the subject in Colman's humorous verse, Scott was quite two single gentlemen rolled into one. Clerk of the Court of Session, Sheriff of Selkirkshire, country gentleman, the life of every circle in which he mixed, giving and receiving social enjoyment, as if society was his greatest delight,—who would have thought of the other Scott, who to all this preferred solitude, and the company of his own imagination, on the wings of which he traversed the world and space in many a protean shape,—himself the magician, and himself one of the principal actors in the fanciful dramas of his brain? This feature of his character

comes out strongly in the confidences revealed by his Diary. In one place, for instance, he says:—

“Notwithstanding the depressing effects of the calomel, I feel the pleasure of being alone and uninterrupted. Few men, leading a quiet life, and without any strong or highly varied change of circumstances, have seen more variety of society than I—few have enjoyed it more, or been *bored*, as it is called, less by the company of tiresome people. I have rarely, if ever, found anyone out of whom I could not extract amusement or edification; and were I obliged to account for hints afforded on such occasions, I should make an ample deduction from my inventive powers. Still, however, from the earliest time I can remember, I preferred the pleasure of being alone to waiting for visitors, and have often taken a bannock and a bit of cheese to the wood or hill, to avoid dining with company. As I grew from boyhood to manhood, I saw this would not do, and that to gain a place in men's esteem I must mix and bustle with them. Pride and an excitation of spirits supplied the real pleasure which others seem to feel in society, and certainly upon many occasions it was real. Still, if the question was, eternal company, without the power of retiring within yourself, or solitary confinement for life, I should say, ‘Turnkey,

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lock the cell !' My life, though not without its fits of waking and strong exertion, has been a sort of dream, spent in

'Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.'

*I have worn a wishing-cap, the power of which has been to divert present griefs by a touch of the wand of imagination, and gild over the future prospect by prospects more fair than can ever be realised. Somewhere it is said that this castle-building—this wielding of the aerial trowel—is fatal to exertions in actual life. I cannot tell; I have not found it so. I cannot, indeed, say, like Madame Genlis, that, in the imaginary scenes in which I have acted a part, I ever prepared myself for anything which actually befell me; but I have certainly fashioned out much that made the present hour pass pleasantly away, and much that has enabled me to contribute to the amusement of the public. Since I was five years old, I cannot remember the time when I had not some ideal part to play for my own solitary amusement."*<sup>1</sup>

1 "There are times

When fancy plays her gambols in despite  
Even of our watchful senses, when in sooth  
Substance seems shadow, shadow substance seems;  
When the broad, palpable, and marked partition  
'Twixt that which is and is not, seems dissolved,

Further on in the Diary he records a day thus spent in solitude:—

“Colonel and Captain Ferguson came to breakfast. I walked half-way home with them, then turned back, and spent the day, which was delightful, wandering from place to place in the woods, sometimes reading the new and interesting volumes of *Cyril Thornton*, sometimes chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy which strangely alternated in my mind, idly stirred by the succession of a thousand vague thoughts and fears; the gay thoughts strangely mingled with those of dismal melancholy; tears which seemed ready to flow unbidden; smiles which approached to those of insanity; all that wild variety of mood which solitude engenders. I scribbled some verses, or rather composed them in my memory.”

This habit of giving fantastic form and language to abstract ideas, receives plenty of illustrations in his *Diary*, where Scott allows his pen to give free vent to this peculiarity of his.<sup>1</sup> Many are the diverting

As if the mental eye gained power to gaze  
Beyond the limits of the existing world.  
Such hours of shadowy dreams I better love  
Than all the gross realities of life.”

*My Aunt Margaret's Mirror.*

<sup>1</sup> “I do not compare myself in point of imagination to Wordsworth—far from it; for his is naturally exquisite, and



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colloquies—ay, and pitiful enough ones, too—that he holds with Madame Duty, now like an old house-keeper with an idle chambermaid,—and now in another guise represented in the following passage: “When I was a child, and indeed for some years after, my amusement was in supposing to myself a set of persons engaged in various scenes which contrasted them with each other, and I remember to this day the accuracy of my childish imagination. This might be the effect of a natural turn to fictitious narrative, or it might be the cause of it, or there might be action and reaction, or it does not signify a pin’s head how it is. But with a flash of this remaining spirit I imagine my mother Duty to be a sort of taskmistress, like the hag of the merchant Abudah, in the tales of the Genii—not a hag, though, by any means; on the contrary, my old woman wears a rich old-fashioned gown of black silk, with ruffles of triple blonde lace, and a coif as rich as that of Pearl-  
ing Jean; a clear blue eye, capable of great severity

highly cultivated by constant exercise. But I can see as many castles in the clouds, as any man, as many genii in the curling smoke of a steam-engine, as perfect a Persepolis in the embers of a sea-coal fire. My life has been spent in such day-dreams. But I cry no roast meat. There are times a man should remember what Rousseau used to say: “*Tais-toi, Jean-Jacques, car on ne l’entend pas!*”—*Diary.*

of expression, and conforming in that with a wrinkled brow, of which the ordinary expression is a serious approach to a frown—a cautionary and nervous shake of the head; in her withered hand an ebony staff with a crutch head,—a Tompion gold watch, which annoys all who know her by striking the quarters as regularly as if one wished to hear them. Occasionally she has a small scourge of nettles, which I feel her lay across my fingers at this moment. I have 150 pages to write yet. Does Duty wear a pair of round old-fashioned silver buckles? Buckles she has, but they are square ones. All belonging to Duty is rectangular. Thus can we poor children of imagination play with the ideas we create, like children with soap bubbles. Pity that we pay for it at other times by starting at our shadows.”

Another illustration of this inclination for solitude: “I like the hermit life indifferently well, nor would, I sometimes think, break my heart were I to be in that magic mountain where food was regularly supplied by ministering genii, and plenty of books were accessible, without the least intervention of human society. But this is thinking like a fool. Solitude is only agreeable when the power of having society is removed to a short space, and can be commanded at pleasure. ‘It is not good for man to

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be alone.' It blunts our faculties and freezes our active virtues. And now, my watch pointing to noon, I think after four hours' work I may indulge myself with a walk. The dogs see me about to shut up my desk, and intimate their happiness by caresses and whining. By your leave, Messrs. Genii of the Mountain Library, if I come to your retreat I'll bring my dogs with me.

"The day was showery, but not unpleasant. I had the patience to get fully wet, and the grace to be thankful for it.

"Come! a leetle flourish on the trumpet. Let us rouse the genius of this same red mountain, so called because it is all the year covered with roses. Well, I open my Ephemerides, form my scheme under the suitable planet, and the genii obeys the invocation and appears.

"Genii is a misshapen dwarf, with a huge jolter-head like that of Boerhave on the Bridge, his limbs and body marvellously shrunk and disproportioned."

After some dialogue between himself and the Genii, the imaginary conversation is continued:—

*Author.*—"I am about to ask you a serious question. When you have stuffed your stomach, drunk your bottle, smoked your cigar, how are you to keep yourself awake?"

*Genii.*—"Either by cephalic snuff or castle-building!"

*Author.*—"Do you approve of castle-building as a frequent exercise?"

*Genii.*—"Life were not life without it!"

'Give me the joy that sickens not the heart,  
Give me the wealth that has no wings to fly.'

*Author.*—"I reckon myself one of the best aerial architects now living, and *nil me pœnitet hujus.*"

*Genii.*—"Nec est cur te pœniteat; most of your novels have previously been subjects for airy castles."

*Author.*—"You have me;—and moreover a man of imagination derives experience from such imaginary situations. There are few situations in which I have not in fancy figured, and there are few, of course, which I am not previously prepared to take some part in."

*Genii.*—"True, but I am afraid your having fancied yourself victorious in many a fight would be of little use were you suddenly called to the field, and your personal infirmities and nervous agitations both rushing upon you and incapacitating you."

*Author.*—"My nervous agitations! away with

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thee! Down, down to Limbo and the burning lake!  
False fiend, avoid!"

"So there ends the tale,  
With a hey and a hoy,  
So there ends the tale,  
With a ho!

"There is a moral. If you fail  
To seize it by the tail,  
Its import will exhale,  
You must know."

In the confidences revealed in Scott's Diary in his old age occur these words:—

"Broken-hearted for two years—my heart handsomely pieced again, but the crack will remain till my dying day."

In the year 1810, after thirteen years of married life, Lady Forbes died, and this event must have revived all the old tender and painful recollections with a sadness and solemnity special to such an occasion, for the sacred memories of the past never faded away into oblivion. But there is no diary of Scott's earlier than 1825, or we might have some

<sup>1</sup> *March 19.*—"The above was written yesterday before dinner, though appearances are to the contrary."—*Diary.* The above will remind one of an entry in the Journal previously quoted, in which Scott refers to the "kind of buoyancy—he knew not what to call it—that mingled with his deepest afflictions and most gloomy hours."

traces of these memories to record here, such as we find in 1827 on the occasion of an excursion to St. Andrews—a place he had first visited in the company of Miss Stuart.

“This day we went off in a body to St. Andrews. The ruins have lately been cleared out. They had been chiefly magnificent from their size—not their extent of ornament. I did not go up St. Rule’s tower, as on former occasions; this is a falling off, for when did I remain sitting below when there was a steeple to be ascended? But the rheumatism has begun to change that vein for some time past, though I think this is the first decided sign of acquiescence in my lot. I sat down on a gravestone, and recollected the first visit I made to St. Andrews, now thirty-four years ago. What changes in my feeling and my fortune have since then taken place; some for the better, many for the worse. I remember the name I then carved in Runic characters on the turf beside the Castle gate, and I asked why it should still agitate my heart. But my friends came down from the tower, and the foolish idea was chased away.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “There are few more melancholy sensations than those with which we regard scenes of past pleasure when altered or deserted. In my ride to Osbaldistone Hall, I passed the same

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There can be no doubt that the memories of the past filled up a large part of his ideal life, unknown to and unsuspected by all around him, and that this early love never died but with his life. It is not necessary that it should have been always dominating his mind. However great our affection may be for those nearest us, the sensation of its presence occupies but a comparatively small portion of our waking hours, but it is there all the same, ready to rise to the surface of feeling whenever summoned by thoughts, events, or associations.

The reference in Scott's Journal to his temper and feelings after the death of his wife were many, and natural in a private record intended for the information of his family. In those references he allowed his emotions to get the better of the inclination he always felt, to suppress, so far as possible, any manifestation of his deeper feelings ; and later on he seems to have made a determined resolution to put a stop to such

objects which I had seen in company with Miss Vernon on the day of our memorable ride from Inglewood Place. Her spirit seemed to keep me company on the way ; and when I approached the spot where I had first met her, I almost listened for the cry of the hounds and the notes of the horn, and strained my eye on the vacant space, as if to descry the fair huntress again descend like an apparition from the hill. But all was silent, and all was solitary."—*Rob Roy*.

expressions. He says : " As I have been so lately Johnsonising, I should derive, if possible, some personal use. Johnson advises Boswell to keep a diary, and to omit registers of weather, and like trumpery. I am resolved in future not to register what is yet more futile—my gleams of bright and clouded temper."

It may readily be imagined, therefore, that, in regard to that more delicate matter, his early and unfortunate love affair, his reticence would be very marked, and such allusions to it as he does make, have, in this light, a special significance, and brief and comparatively few as they are, speak volumes in themselves.

The imaginative life of which he speaks in the Diary, and in which he and the lady in question took such important parts, could not but come out strongly in his poems and novels. Margaret in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Ellen in the *Lady of the Lake*, Matilda in *Rokeby*, and the Lady Green Mantle in *Redgauntlet*, all bore, according to Lockhart, some distinctive features drawn from the memory of Scott's first love. In *Redgauntlet*, as we have seen, as well as in *Rob Roy*, he himself becomes the fortunate lover ; and in *Rokeby* again he appears, but this time, truer to the facts, as the unfortunate one. Still again, but in another guise, in *The Bridal of Triermain*, he



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pictures himself as the imaginative hero, a poet also, who successfully woos with his poetry a lady of higher position than his own. The introductory parts or love passages between the poet and his Lucy, contain, as Lockhart remarks, some of the most exquisite passages Scott ever produced. The work was published anonymously, and as apparently an imitation of Scott himself. The *Critical Review* lighted at once upon the real source that inspired the writer. "The first subject," says the critic, "is the history (real or imaginary, we presume not to guess which) of the author's passion, courtship, and marriage with a young lady, his superior in rank and circumstances, to whom he relates at intervals the story which may be considered as the principal design of the work to which it gives its title."

In addition to the works and passages already alluded to or quoted, many other passages scattered through his prose and poetical writings could be cited—all owing their inspiration to the same source. We have, however, given a sufficient number of examples to prove the continuous existence of this haunting memory, not necessarily of the real individual, but of her whom his imagination had created and elevated into a kind of divinity—the statue of snow he had built, and that he wept when it melted.

## CHAPTER XIII

“AS ONE FROM THE DEAD”

“Toll the bell,  
Greatness is o'er;  
The heart is broke,  
To ache no more:

An unsubstantial pageant all—  
Drop o'er the scene the funeral pall.”

*Anne of Geierstein.*

TIME passed on; more than thirty years had elapsed since his bitter love disappointment, and seventeen years since the death of the object of his attachment; his wife was also dead; gigantic financial troubles had fallen upon him with a crushing weight; and disease was at times racking his body; when, one day, there came to him a letter that once more brought back vividly to his mind the old, old story, and stirred his nature to its depths.

The letter was marked as from “One who had been in former happy days no stranger to him,” and,

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on turning to the signature, he found it was from Lady Jane Stuart, the aged mother of his early love. He had neither seen nor communicated with the venerable lady since the last memorable visit to Invermay, that ended so disastrously for his peace of mind. The letter contained a simple request. Lady Jane had in her possession an ancient album that had apparently belonged to her daughter, and in this album were some ballads in Scott's handwriting, which, on behalf of a friend, she desired permission to print.

Sir Walter's reply has not been preserved. It elicited from the lady, however, a second letter, which is thus alluded to in his Diary :—

“When I came home, a surprise amounting to a shock reached me in another letter from Lady Jane Stuart. Methinks this explains the gloom which hung about me yesterday. I own that the recurrence to these matters seems like a summons from the grave. It fascinates me. I ought perhaps to have stopped it at once, but I have not nerve to do so. Alas ! alas ! But why alas ? *Humana perpessi sumus.*”

No wonder the contents of the letter moved him. If it Lady Jane said that she would convey to him the Manuscript Book “as a sacred and secret treasure, could she but know that he would take it,

as she gave it, without a drawback or misconstruction of her intention.” And she adds: “Were I to lay open my heart (of which you know little indeed), you would find how it has, and ever shall be, warm toward you. My age [she was then seventy-four] encourages me, and I have longed to tell you. Not the mother who bore you followed you more anxiously (though secretly) with her blessing than I. Age has its tales to tell and sorrows to unfold.”

The meaning of this surely would seem to be, that this early friend and companion of his mother had so held him in her sympathy and affection that she would have welcomed him to her heart as her daughter's husband, if it had not been otherwise ordained, and that his disappointment had been to her the cause of sorrow and regret. It may, however, allude to circumstances which, if known, might not quite justify Lockhart's remark that in regard to these early episodes of Sir Walter's career no one was to blame.

In the winter of 1827, in which the above letters were written, Scott had taken a house in Edinburgh, in Shandwick Place, and it was but a few days after he had established himself in his new quarters that he heard that the writer was living within a stone's throw of him. A longing to see her once more,

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and to talk over the old times, seems to have come over him, and he asked Mrs. Skene, a mutual friend (the wife of one of his dearest friends,<sup>1</sup> and sister to Sir William Forbes), to take him to see the lady. She complied with his wish, and, after Scott's death, she told Lockhart that a very painful scene had ensued. Sir Walter's record of it in his Diary is simply—

“I waited on Lady Jane Stuart—an affecting meeting.”

According to Mrs. Skene, it was probably on returning from this interview that he wrote down from that marvellous memory of his “some verses that were found among his manuscripts after his death. Lockhart says “they are headed ‘To Time, by a Lady,’ but certain *initials* on the back satisfy me that the

<sup>1</sup> Scott's old and dear friend, James Skene, died in 1864, in his ninetieth year. “His faculties remained unimpaired throughout his serene and beautiful old age, until the end was very near; then, one evening, his daughter found him with a look of inexpressible delight on his face, when he said to her, ‘I have had such a great pleasure! Scott has been here—he came from a long distance to see me; he has been sitting with me at the fireside, talking over our happy recollections of the past.’”

“Two or three days after, he followed his well-loved friend into the unseen world—gently and calmly, like a child falling asleep, he passed away in perfect peace.”—*David Douglas*.

authoress was no other than the object of his first passion. I think I must be pardoned for transcribing the lines that had dwelt so long upon his memory—leaving it to the reader's fancy to picture the mood of mind in which the fingers of a grey-haired man may have traced such a relic of his youthful dreams.”<sup>1</sup>

As to the authorship of the verses which we give below, Lockhart was probably mistaken. An intimate friend of both parties stated that the lines were great favourites of the lady's, that she herself had given him a copy of them, and that no doubt her recitation of them had made them known to Scott. Her initials on the back of the copy are capable of explanation in this way.

### To Time

“Friend of the wretch oppressed with grief,  
Whose lenient hand, though slow, supplies  
The balm that lends to care relief,  
That wipes her tears, that checks her sighs!

<sup>1</sup> “I have set to work to clear away papers [on leaving his Edinburgh house] and pack them for my journey. What a strange medley of thoughts such a task produces! There lie letters which made the heart throb when received, now lifeless and uninteresting—as are perhaps their owners. Riddles, which time has read—schemes which he has destroyed or brought to maturity—memorials of friendships and enmities which are

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" 'Tis thine the wounded soul to heal,  
That hopeless bleeds from sorrow's smart,  
From stern misfortune's shaft to steal  
The barb that rankles in the heart.

" What though with thee the roses fly,  
And jocund youth's gay reign is o'er ;  
Though dimmed the lustre of the eye,  
And love's vain dreams enchant no more ;

" Yet in thy train come dove-eyed peace,  
Indifference with her heart of snow ;  
At her cold touch, lo ! sorrows cease,  
No thorns beneath her roses grow.

" Oh, haste to grant thy suppliant's prayer,  
To me thy torpid calm impart ;  
Rend from my brow youth's garland fair ;  
But take the thorn that's in my heart.

" Oh ! why do fabling poets tell  
That thy fleet wings outstrip the wind ?  
Why feign thy course of joy the knell,  
And call thy slowest pace unkind ?

" To me thy tedious feeble pace  
Comes laden with the weight of years ;  
With sighs I view morn's blushing face,  
And hail mild evening with my tears."

pow alike faded. Thus does the ring of Saturn consume itself. To-day annihilates yesterday, as the old tyrant swallows his children, and the snake its tail. But I must say to my *Gurnall*, as poor Byron said to Moore, ' D—n it, Tom, don't be poetical.' "—*Diary*.

That time had brought to Sir Walter neither indifference nor surcease of sorrow, let the following entry in his Diary tell. It has been in part already quoted, and records his second visit to Lady Stuart :—

“I went to make another visit, and fairly softened myself like an old fool with recalling old stories, till I was fit for nothing but shedding tears and repeating verses for the whole night. This is sad work ; the very grave gives up its dead, and time rolls back thirty years to add to my perplexities. I don’t care. I begin to grow over-hardened, and, like a stag turned to bay, my naturally good temper grows fierce and dangerous. Yet what a romance to tell—and told it will one day be. And then my three years of dreaming and my two years of wakening will be chronicled, doubtless. But the dead will feel no pain.”

Three days later he returns again to see the old lady, and his Diary says :—

“At twelve o’clock I went to poor Lady Jane Stuart to talk over old stories. I am not clear that it is right or healthful indulgence to be ripping up old sorrows, but it seems to give her deep-seated sorrow words, and that is mental blood-letting. To me these things are now matter of calm and solemn reflection, never to be forgotten, but scarce to be



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remembered with pain. We go to St. Catherine's to-day. I am glad of it, for I would not have these recollections haunt me, and society will put them out of my head."

There are statements in this last extract that portray rather what he wished were the case than the actual truth. That he, the tenderest-hearted of mortals, had grown case-hardened and fierce and dangerous in his temper, or that the recollections of the past gave him no pain, are disproved by the context.

Seventeen days later on, this entry occurs:—

"I visited Lady Stuart on my return—came home too fagged to do anything to purpose."

Later visits to the lady are mentioned in the Diary, without comments except as to her health. Scott evidently felt that he had said enough on the subject. She lived for nearly two years after this renewal of intimacy, and died during his absence from Edinburgh. As a blank of about three months occurs in his Diary at this time, there is no record of his feelings at the loss of his old friend, but we may be sure they are both sad and solemn.

In less than three years he was himself to follow her to the grave. One by one most of his old friends had passed away. His first love, his wife, his favourite grandchild—all dead. His body enfeebled by

disease, and his brain weary and well-nigh worn out with the Titanic labours he had imposed upon himself, it is not to be wondered that he showed a willingness, nay, indeed, a wish, to depart. Hovering on the borders of the unseen world, to which his thoughts in later days were so often directed, what hopes and anticipations were his of the meeting, where there would be no embarrassment or misunderstanding, with those he had loved on earth, and not the least with her whose memory had been enshrined in his inmost heart for more than forty years of an active and memorable life.

“For when the earthly hopes of men are past,  
There is a feeling in each human heart,  
A yearning longing that the soul at last  
In some far brighter world will have a part;  
Where yet each withered flower again shall bloom,  
And care and misery shall have no room;

“Where we shall see once more the dear ones gone,  
Whose vacant places in our haunted breast,  
Although no longer outwardly we mourn,  
Have ne’er been filled by some more welcome guest;  
Where, sweetest music of the heavenly sphere,  
Their happy voices we again shall hear.”

Amen, so may it be!

## APPENDIX A

### EARLY CHILDHOOD AT SANDY-KNOWE

SCOTT says that his consciousness of existence dated from Sandy-Knowe; and how deep and indelible was the impression which its romantic localities had left on his imagination, I need not remind the readers of *Marmion* and the *Eve of St. John*. On the summit of the crags which overhang the farmhouse stands the ruined tower of Smailholm, the scene of that fine ballad; and the view from thence takes in a wide expanse of the district in which, as has been truly said, every field has its battle, and every rivulet its song:—

“ The lady looked in mournful mood,  
Looked over hill and vale,  
O'er Mertoun's wood and Tweed's fair flood,  
And all down Teviotdale.”

Mertoun, the principal seat of the Harden family, with its noble groves; nearly in front of it, across the

Tweed, Lessudden, the comparatively small but still venerable and stately abode of the Lairds of Raeburn ; and the hoary abbey of Dryburgh, surrounded with yew-trees as ancient as itself, seem to lie almost below the feet of the spectator. Opposite him rise the purple peaks of Eildon, the traditional scene of Thomas the Rhymer's interview with the Queen of Faerie ; behind are the blasted peel which the seer of Ercildoun himself inhabited, "the Broom of the Cowdenknowes," the pastoral valley of the Leader, and the bleak wilderness of Lammermoor. To the eastward, the desolate grandeur of Hume Castle breaks the horizon, as the eye travels toward the range of the Cheviot. A few miles westward, Melrose, "like some tall rock with lichens grey," appears clasped within the windings of the Tweed ; and the distance presents the serrated mountains of the Gala, the Ettrick, and the Yarrow, all famous in song. Such were the objects that had painted the earliest images on the eye of the last and greatest of the Border minstrels.

As his memory reached to an earlier period of childhood than of almost any other person, so assuredly has no poet given to the world a picture of the dawning feeling of life and genius, at once so simple, so beautiful, and so complete, as that of his

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epistle to William Erskine, the chief literary confidant  
and counsellor of his prime of manhood :—

" Whether an impulse that has birth  
 Soon as the infant wakes on earth,  
 One with our feelings and our powers,  
 And rather part of us than ours ;  
 Or whether fitlier termed the sway  
 Of habit formed in early day,  
 Howe'er derived, its force confess,  
 Rules with despotic sway the breast,  
 And drags us on by viewless chain,  
 While taste and reason plead in vain. . . .  
 Thus, while I ape the measure wild  
 Of tales that charmed me yet a child,  
 Rude though they be, still with the chime  
 Return the thoughts of early time ;  
 And feelings roused in life's first day,  
 Glow in the line and prompt the lay.  
 Then rise those crags, that mountain tower,  
 Which charmed my fancy's waking hour.  
 It was a barren scene and wild,  
 Where naked cliffs were rudely piled ;  
 But ever and anon between  
 Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green ;  
 And well the lonely infant knew  
 Recesses where the wall-flower grew,  
 And honey-suckle loved to crawl  
 Up the low crag and ruined wall.  
 I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade  
 The sun in all its round surveyed ;  
 And still I thought that shattered tower  
 The mightiest work of human power,  
 And marvelled as the aged hind  
 With some strange tale bewitched my mind,

Of forayers who, with headlong force,  
Down from that strength had spurred their horse,  
Their southern rapine to renew,  
Far in the distant Cheviots blue ;  
And, home returning, filled the hall  
With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.  
Methought that still with tramp and clang  
The gateway's broken arches rang ;  
Methought grim features, seamed with scars,  
Glared through the windows' rusty bars ;  
And ever, by the winter hearth,  
Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,  
Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,  
Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms—  
Of patriot battles won of old  
By Wallace Wight and Bruce the Bold—  
Of later fields of feud and fight,  
When, pouring from their Highland height,  
The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,  
Had swept the scarlet ranks away.  
While, stretched at length upon the floor,  
Again I fought each combat o'er,  
Pebbles and shells, in order laid,  
The mimic ranks of war displayed,  
And onward still the Scottish Lion bore,  
And still the scattered Southron fled before."

There are still living in that neighbourhood two old women who were in the domestic service at Sandy-Knowe when the lame child was brought thither in his third year. One of them, Tibby Hunter, remembers his coming well; and that "he was a sweet-tempered bairn, a darling with all about the

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house." The young ewe-milkers delighted, she says, "to carry him about on their backs among the crags ; and he was very gleg (quick) at the uptake, and soon kenned every sheep and lamb by head-mark as well as any of them." His great pleasure, however, was in the society of the "aged hind" recorded in the epistle to Erskine. "Auld Sandy Ormistouin," called from the most dignified part of his function, the cow-bailie, had the chief superintendence of the flocks that browsed upon "the velvet tufts of loveliest green." If the child saw him in the morning, he could not be satisfied unless the old man would set him astride on his shoulder, and take him to keep him company as he lay watching his charge.

" Here was poetic impulse given,  
By the green hill and clear blue heaven."

The cow-bailie blew a particular note on his whistle, which signified to the maid-servants in the house below when the little boy wished to be carried home. He told his friend, Mr. Skene of Rubislaw, when spending a summer day in his old age among those well-remembered crags, that he delighted to roll about on the grass all day long, in the midst of the flock, and that "the sort of fellowship he thus formed with the sheep and the lambs had impressed his mind with a degree of affectionate feeling towards

them which had lasted throughout life." There is a story of his having been forgotten one day among the knolls, when a thunderstorm came on, and his aunt suddenly recollecting his situation, and running out to bring him home, is said to have found him lying on his back, clapping his hands at the lightning, and crying out, "Bonny! bonny!" at every flash.—*Lockhart's Life of Scott.*



## APPENDIX B

"A SILENCE ONLY BROKEN BY A KISS OF DI VERNON'S"  
(See Chapter VIII.)

THE solitary instance (alluded to in the above quotation from Andrew Lang) in which Scott allowed himself to abandon his practice of not recording sentimental scenes between his heroes and heroines, such as embracing and kissing, occurs in *Rob Roy*, where also one embrace, occupying two lines to describe, is to be found. The kiss is of so mild a character that its description could scarce be considered a violation of any resolution—if resolution he ever took against the mention of such love passages. It is as follows—we give the concluding part of the adventure only:—

"Mr. Francis Osbaldistone," said the other rider, in a voice the tones of which thrilled through every nerve of my body, "should not whistle his favourite airs when he wishes to remain undiscovered."

“And Diana Vernon—for she, wrapped in a horse-man’s cloak, was the last speaker—whistled in playful mimicry the second part of the tune which was on my lips when they came up.

“Good God !” I exclaimed, like one thunder-struck, “can it be you, Miss Vernon, on such a spot—at such an hour—in such a lawless country—in such”—

“In such a masculine dress, you would say.—But what would you have? The philosophy of the excellent Corporal Nym is the best, after all : things must be as they may—*pauca verba.*”

While she was thus speaking, I eagerly took advantage of an unusually bright gleam of moonshine to study the appearance of her companion ; for it may be easily supposed that, finding Miss Vernon in a place so solitary, engaged in a journey so dangerous, and under the protection of one gentleman only, were circumstances to excite every feeling of jealousy, as well as surprise. The rider did not speak with the deep melody of Rashleigh’s voice ; his tones were more high and commanding ; he was taller, moreover, as he sat on horseback, than that first-rate object of my hate and suspicion. Neither did the stranger’s address resemble that of any of my other cousins ; it had that indescribable tone and manner by which we

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recognise a man of sense and breeding, even in the first few sentences he speaks.

The object of my anxiety seemed anxious to get rid of my investigation.

"Diana," he said, in a tone of mingled kindness and authority, "give your cousin his property, and let us not spend time here."

Miss Vernon had in the meantime taken out a small case, and, leaning down from her horse towards me, she said, in a tone in which an effort at her usual quaint lightness of expression contended with a deeper and more grave tone of sentiment, "You see, my dear coz, I was born to be your better angel. Rashleigh has been compelled to yield up his spoil, and had we reached this same village of Aberfoil last night, as we purposed, I should have found some Highland sylph to have wafted to you all these representatives of commercial wealth. But there were giants and dragons in the way; and errant knights and damsels of modern times, bold though they be, must not, as of yore, run into useless danger. Do not you do so either, my dear coz."

"Diana," said her companion, "let me once more warn you that the evening waxes late, and we are still distant from our home."

"I am coming, sir; I am coming.—Consider," she

added, with a sigh, "how lately I have been subjected to control—besides, I have not yet given my cousin the packet, and bid him farewell—for ever. Yes, Frank," she said, "for ever!—There is a gulf between us—a gulf of absolute perdition;—where we go, you must not follow—what we do, you must not share in. —Farewell—be happy!"

In the attitude in which she bent from her horse, which was a Highland pony, her face, not perhaps altogether unwillingly, touched mine. She pressed my hand, while the tear that trembled in her eye found its way to my cheek instead of her own. It was a moment never to be forgotten—inexpressibly bitter, yet mixed with a sensation of pleasure so deeply soothing and affecting as at once to unlock all the floodgates of the heart. It was *but* a moment, however; for, instantly recovering from the feeling to which she had involuntarily given way, she intimated to her companion she was ready to attend him, and, putting their horses at a brisk pace, they were soon far distant from the place where I stood.

Heaven knows, it was not apathy which loaded my frame and tongue so much that I could neither return Miss Vernon's half embrace nor even answer her farewell. The word, though it rose to my tongue, seemed to choke in my throat like the fatal

*guilty*, which the delinquent who makes it his plea knows must be followed by the doom of death. The surprise—the sorrow, almost stupefied me. I remained motionless with the packet in my hand, gazing after them, as if endeavouring to count the sparkles which flew from the horses' hoofs. I continued to look after even these had ceased to be visible, and to listen to their footsteps long after the last distant trampling had died in my ears. At length, tears rushed to my eyes, glazed as they were by the exertion of straining after what was no longer to be seen. I wiped them mechanically, and almost without being aware that they were flowing—but they came thicker and thicker; I felt a tightening of the throat and breast—the *hysterica passio* of poor Lear; and, sitting down by the wayside, I shed a flood of the first and most bitter tears which had flowed from my eyes since childhood.

## APPENDIX C

### COURTSHIP OF MISS CARPENTER

AFTER the rising of the Court of Session in July 1797, Scott set out on a tour to the English Lakes, accompanied by his brother John and Adam Ferguson. Their first stage was Halyards, in Tweeddale, then inhabited by his friend's father, the philosopher and historian; and they stayed there for a day or two, in the course of which Scott had his first and only interview with David Ritchie, the original of his Black Dwarf. Proceeding southwards, the tourists visited Carlisle, Penrith,—the vale of the Eamont, including Mayburgh and Brougham Castle,—Ullswater and Windermere; and at length fixed their headquarters at the then peaceful and sequestered little watering-place of Gilsland, making excursions from thence to the various scenes of romantic interest which are commemorated in *The Bridal of Triermain*, and otherwise leading very much the sort of

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life depicted among the loungers of *St. Ronan's Well*. Scott was, on his first arrival, not a little engaged with the beauty of one of the young ladies lodged under the same roof; and it was on the occasion of a visit in her company to some part of the Roman Wall that he indited the lines—

“Take these flowers, which, purple waving,  
On the ruined ramparts grew,” &c.

But this was only a passing flirtation. A week or so afterwards commenced a more serious affair.

Riding one day with Ferguson, they met, some miles from Gilsland, a young lady taking the air on horseback, whom neither of them had previously remarked, and whose appearance instantly struck both so much that they kept her in view until they had satisfied themselves that she also was one of the party at Gilsland. The same evening there was a ball, at which Captain Scott produced himself in his regimentals, and Ferguson also thought proper to be equipped in the uniform of the Edinburgh Volunteers. There was no little rivalry among the young travellers as to who should first get presented to the unknown beauty of the morning's ride; but though both the gentlemen in scarlet had the advantage of being dancing partners, their friend succeeded in handing

the fair stranger to supper—and such was his first introduction to Charlotte Margaret Carpenter.

Without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions: “a form that was fashioned as light as a fay’s”; a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep-set, and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven’s wing; her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty young Englishwoman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain natural archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompaniment of a French accent. A lovelier vision, as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined; and from that hour the fate of the young poet was fixed. . . .

Scott’s father was now in a very feeble state of health, which accounts for his first announcement of this affair being made in a letter to his mother; it is undated,—but by this time the young lady had left for Carlisle, where she remained until her destiny was settled—

“*To Mrs. Scott, George’s Square, Edinburgh.*”

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—I should very ill deserve the care and affection with which you have ever



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regarded me, were I to neglect my duty so far as to omit consulting my father and you in the most important step which I can possibly take in life, and upon the success of which my future happiness must depend. It is with pleasure I think that I can avail myself of your advice and instructions in an affair of so great importance as that which I have at present in my hands. You will probably guess from this preamble that I am engaged in a matrimonial plan, which is really the case. Though my acquaintance with the young lady has not been of long standing, this circumstance is in some degree counterbalanced by the intimacy in which we have lived, and by the opportunities which that intimacy has afforded me of remarking her conduct and sentiments on many different occasions, some of which were rather of a delicate nature, so that in fact I have seen more of her during the few weeks we have been together, than I could have done after a much longer acquaintance, shackled by the common forms of ordinary life. You will not expect from me a description of her person—for which I refer you to my brother, as also for a fuller account of all the circumstances attending the business than can be comprised in the compass of a letter. Without flying into raptures, then, I may safely assure you that her temper is

sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and, what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious. I have been very explicit with her upon the nature of my expectations, and she thinks she can accommodate herself to the situation which I should wish her to hold in society as my wife, which, you will easily comprehend, I mean should neither be extravagant nor degrading. Her fortune, though partly depending upon her brother, who is high in office at Madras, is very considerable—at present £500 a year. This, however, we must, in some degree, regard as precarious—I mean to the full extent; and indeed, when you know her, you will not be surprised that I regard this circumstance chiefly because it removes those prudential considerations which would otherwise render our union impossible for the present. Betwixt her income and my own professional exertions, I have little doubt we will be enabled to hold that rank in society which my family and situation entitle me to fill.

“My dear mother, I cannot express to you the anxiety I have that you will not think me flighty in this business. Believe me that experience, in one instance—you cannot fail to know to what I allude—is too recent to permit my being so hasty in my conclusions as the warmth of my temper might have

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otherwise prompted. I am also most anxious that you should be prepared to show her kindness, which I know the goodness of your own heart will prompt, more especially when I tell you that she is an orphan, without relations and almost without friends. Her guardian is—I should say *was*, for she is of age—Lord Downshire, to whom I must write for his consent—a piece of respect to which he is entitled for his care of her ;—and there the matter rests at present. I think I need not tell you that if I assume the new character which I threaten, I shall be happy to find that in that capacity I may make myself more useful to my brothers, and especially<sup>o</sup> to Anne, than I could in any other. On the other hand, I shall certainly expect that my friends will endeavour to show every attention in their power to a woman who forsakes for me prospects much more splendid than what I can offer, and who comes into Scotland without a single friend but myself. I find I could write a great deal more upon this subject, but as it is late, and as I must write to my father, I shall restrain myself. I think (but you are best judge) that in the circumstances in which I stand, you should write to her, Miss Carpenter, under cover to me at Carlisle.

“Write to me very fully upon this important subject—send me your opinion, your advice, and

above all, your blessing ; you will see the necessity of not delaying a minute in doing so, and in keeping this business *strictly private*, till you hear further from me, since you are not ignorant that even at this advanced period an objection on the part of Lord Downshire, or many other accidents, may intervene ; in which case I should little wish my disappointment to be public.

“ Believe me, my dear Mother,

“ Ever your dutiful and affectionate son,

“ WALTER SCOTT.”

Scott remained in Cumberland until the Jedburgh Assizes recalled him to his legal duties. On arriving in that town, he immediately sent for his friend Shortrede, whose *memorandum* records that the evening of the 30th September 1797 was one of the most joyous he ever spent. “ Scott,” he says, “ was *sair* beside himself about Miss Carpenter ;—we toasted her twenty times over—and sat together, he raving about her, until it was one in the morning.” He soon returned to Cumberland ; and the following letters will throw light on the character and conduct of the parties, and on the nature of the difficulties which were presented by the prudence and prejudices of the young advocate’s family connections. It

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appears that at one stage of the business Scott had seriously contemplated leaving the Bar at Edinburgh, and establishing himself with his bride (I know not in what capacity) in one of the Colonies.

*"To Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh.*

*"CARLISLE, October 4, 1797.*

"It is only an hour since I received Lord Downshire's letter. You will say, I hope, that I am indeed very good to write so soon, but I almost fear that all my goodness can never carry me through all this plaguy writing. Lord Downshire will be happy to hear from you. He is the very best man on earth—his letter is kind and affectionate, and full of advice, much in the style of *your last*. I am to consult *most carefully my heart*. Do you believe I did not do it when I gave you my consent? It is true I don't like to reflect on that subject. I am afraid. It is very awful to think it is for life. How can I ever laugh after such tremendous thoughts? I believe never more. I am hurt to find that your friends don't think the match a prudent one. If it is not agreeable to them all, you must then forget me, for I have too much pride to think of connecting myself in a family were I not equal to them. Pray, my dear sir, write to Lord D. immediately—explain yourself to him as you

would to me, and he will, I am sure, do all he can to serve us. If you really love me, you must love him, and write to him as you would to a friend.

“Adieu,—*au plaisir de vous revoir bientôt.*”

“C. C.”

“*To Robert Shortrede, Esq., Sheriff-Substitute,  
Jedburgh.*”

“SELKIRK, 8th October 1797.

“DEAR BOB,—This day a long train of anxieties was put an end to by a letter from Lord Downshire, couched in the most flattering terms, giving his consent to my marriage with his ward. I am thus far on my way to Carlisle—only for a visit—because, betwixt her reluctance to an immediate marriage, and the imminent approach of the session, I am afraid I shall be thrown back to the Christmas holidays. I shall be home in about eight days.—Ever yours sincerely,

W. SCOTT.”

“*To Miss Christian Rutherford, Ashestiel, by Selkirk.*”

“Has it never happened, to you, my dear Miss Christy, in the course of your domestic economy, to meet with a drawer stuffed so very, *so extremely*, full, that it was very difficult to pull it open, however desirous you might be to exhibit its contents? In

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case this miraculous event has ever taken place, you may somewhat conceive from thence the cause of my silence, which has really proceeded from my having a very great deal to communicate; so much so that I really hardly know how to begin. As for my affection and friendship for you [she was his maternal aunt], believe me sincerely, they neither slumber nor sleep, and it is only your suspicions of their drowsiness which incline me to write at this period of a business highly interesting to me, rather than when I could have done so with something like certainty. Hem! Hem! It must come out at once. I am in a very fair way of being married to a very amiable young woman, with whom I formed an attachment in the course of my tour. She was born in France—her parents were of English extraction—the name Carpenter. She was left an orphan early in life, and educated in England, and is at present under the care of Miss Nicolson, a daughter of the late Dean of Exeter, who was on a visit to her relations in Cumberland. Miss Carpenter is of age, but as she lies under great obligation to the Marquis of Downshire, who was her guardian, she cannot take a step of such importance without his consent—and I daily expect his final answer upon the subject. Her fortune is dependent, in a great measure, upon an

only and very affectionate brother. He is Commercial Resident at Salem in India, and has settled upon her an annuity of £500. Of her personal accomplishments I shall only say, that she possesses very good sense, with uncommon good temper, which I have seen put to most severe trials. I must bespeak your kindness and friendship for her. You may easily believe I shall rest very much both upon Miss R. and you for giving her the *carte de pays* when she comes to Edinburgh. I may give you a hint that there is no *romance* in her composition—and that, though born in France, she has the sentiments and manners of an Englishwoman, and does not like to be thought otherwise. A very slight tinge in her pronunciation is all which marks the foreigner. She is at present at Carlisle, where I shall join her as soon as our arrangements are finally made. Some difficulties have occurred in settling matters with my father, owing to certain prepossessions which you can easily conceive his adopting. One main article was the uncertainty of her provision, which has been in part removed by the safe arrival of her remittances for this year, with assurances of their being regular and even larger in future, her brother's situation being extremely lucrative. Another objection was her birth: 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'



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but as it was *birth merely and solely*, this has been abandoned. *You* will be more interested about other points regarding her, and I can only say that—though our acquaintance was shorter than ever I could have thought of forming such a connection upon—it was exceedingly close, and gave me full opportunities for observation—and if I had parted with her, it must have been for ever, which both parties began to think would be a disagreeable thing. She has conducted herself through the whole business with so much propriety as to make a strong impression in her favour upon the minds of my father and mother, prejudiced as they were against her, from the circumstances I have mentioned. We shall be your neighbours in the New Town, and intend to live very quietly; Charlotte will need many lessons from Miss R. on housewifery. Pray show this letter to Miss R., with my very best compliments. Nothing can now stand in the way except Lord Downshire, who may not think the match a prudent one for Miss C.; but he will surely think her entitled to judge for herself at her age, in what she would wish to place her happiness. She is not a beauty by any means, but her person and face are very engaging. She is a brunette;—her manners are lively, but when necessary she can be very serious. She was baptized and

educated a Protestant of the Church of England. I think I have now said enough upon the subject. Do not write till you hear from me again. I send a goblin story, with best compliments to the misses, and ever am, yours affectionately,                      WALTER SCOTT."

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh.*

"CARLISLE, Oct. 25.

"Indeed, Mr. Scott, I am by no means pleased with all this writing. I have told you how much I dislike it, and yet you still persist in asking me to write, and that by return of post. Oh, you really are quite out of your senses. I should not have indulged you in that whim of yours had you not given me that hint that my silence gives an air of mystery. . . . I hope you are now pleased. Lord D. could have given you every information, as he has been acquainted with all my family. You say you almost love *him*; but until your *almost* comes to a *quite*, I cannot love you. Before I conclude this famous epistle, I will give you a little hint—that is, not to put so many *musts* in your letters—it is beginning *rather too soon*; and another thing is, that I take the liberty not to mind them much, but I expect you to mind me. You *must* take care of yourself; you *must* think of me, and believe me yours sincerely,

C. C."

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"To the Same.

"CARLISLE, Oct. 26.

"I have only a minute before the post goes, to assure you, my dear sir, of the welcome reception of the stranger [a miniature of Scott]. The very great likeness to a friend of mine will endear him to me; he shall be my constant companion; but I wish he could give me an answer to a thousand questions I have to make—one in particular, What reason have you for so many fears you express? Have your friends changed? Pray let me know the truth—they perhaps don't like me, *being French*. Do write immediately—let it be in better spirits. *Et croyez moi toujours votre sincère*

C. C."

"To the Same.

"October 31.

"All your apprehensions about your friends make me very uneasy. At your father's age prejudices are not easily overcome—old people have, you know, so much more wisdom and experience, that we must be guided by them. If he has an objection on my being *French*, I excuse him with all my heart, as I don't love them myself. Oh, how all these things plague me!—when will it end? And to complete the matter,

You talk of going to the West Indies. I am certain your father and uncle say you are a hot-head<sup>y</sup> young man, quite mad, and I assure you I join with them; and I must believe that when you have such an idea, you have then determined to think no more of me. I begin to repent of having accepted your picture. I will send it *back again*, if you ever think again about the West Indies. Your family then would *love me* very much—to forsake them for a *stranger*, a person who does not possess half the charms and good qualities that you *imagine*. I think I hear your uncle calling you a hot-head<sup>y</sup> young man. I am certain of it, and I am *generally* right in my conjectures. What does your sister say about it? I suspect she thinks on the matter as I should do, with fears and anxieties for the happiness of her brother. If it be proper, and you think it would be *acceptable*, present my best compliments to your mother; and to my old acquaintance, Captain Scott, I beg to be remembered. This evening is the first ball—don't you wish to be of the party? I guess your answer—It would give me infinite pleasure. *En attendant le plaisir de vous revoir, je suis toujours votre constante*

C. C.

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*"To the Same.*

*"CARLISLE, Nov. 4.*

"Last night I received the enclosed for you from Lord Downshire [a letter containing his approval of the marriage]. If it has your approbation, I shall be very glad to see you as soon as will be convenient. I have a thousand things to tell you ; but let me beg of you not to think for some time of a house. I am sure I can convince you of the propriety and prudence of waiting until your father will settle things more to your satisfaction, and until I have heard from my brother. You *must* be of my way of thinking.—  
Adieu. C. C."

Scott obeyed the summons, and, I suppose, remained in Carlisle until the Court of Session met, which is always on the 12th of November.

*"To W. Scott, Esq., Advocate, Edinburgh.*

*"CARLISLE, Nov. 14.*

"Your letter never could have come in a more favourable moment. Anything you could have said would have been well received. You surprise me much at the regret you express you had of leaving Carlisle. Indeed, I can't believe it was on my ac-

Count, I was so uncommonly stupid. I don't know what could be the matter with me, I was so very low, and felt really ill: it was even a trouble to speak. The settling of our little plans—all looked so much in earnest—that I began reflecting more seriously than I generally do, or *approve of*. I don't think that very thoughtful people ever can be happy. As this is my maxim, adieu to all thoughts. I have made a determination of being pleased with everything and with everybody in Edinburgh; a wise system of happiness, is it not? I enclose the lock. I have had almost all my hair cut off. Miss Nicolson has taken some, which she sends to London to be made into something, but this you are not to know of, as she intends to present it to you. . . . I am happy to hear of your father's being better pleased as to money matters; it will come at last; don't let that trifle disturb you.—Adieu, Monsieur. J'ai l'honneur d'être votre très humble et très *Obeissante* C. C."

"CARLISLE, Nov. 27.

"You have made me very *triste* all day. Pray never more complain of being poor. Are you not ten times richer than I am? Depend upon yourself and your profession. I have no doubt you will rise very high, and be a *great rich man*, but we should look

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down to be contented with our lot, and banish all disagreeable thoughts. We shall do very well. I am very sorry to hear you have such a *bad head*. I hope I shall nurse away all your aches. I think you write too much. When I am *mistress* I shall not allow it. How very angry I should be with you if you were to part with *Lenore*. Do you really believe I should think it an *unnecessary expense* where your health and pleasure can be concerned? I have a better opinion of you, and I am very glad you don't give up the cavalry, as I love anything that is *stylish*. Don't forget to find a stand for the old carriage, as I shall like to keep it, in case we should have to go any journey; it is so much more convenient than the post-chaises, and will do very well till we can keep *our carriage*. . . . Adieu ~~once~~ more, and believe that you are loved very sincerely by  
C. C."

"Dec. 10.

"If I could but really believe that my letter gave you only half the pleasure you express, I should almost think, my dearest Scott, that I should get very fond of writing merely for the pleasure to *indulge* you—that is saying a great deal. I hope you are sensible of the compliment I pay you, and don't expect I shall *always* be so pretty behaved. You may depend on me, my

dearest friend, for fixing as *early* a day as I possibly can; and if it happens to be not quite as soon as you wish, you must not be angry with me. It is very unlucky you are such a bad housekeeper—as I am no better. I shall try. I hope to have very soon the pleasure of seeing you, and to tell you how much I love you; but I wish the first fortnight was over. With all my love, and those sort of pretty things—  
adieu.

CHARLOTTE.

“*P.S.—Etudiez votre Français!* Remember you are to teach me Italian in return, but I shall be but a stupid scholar. *Aimez Charlotte.*”

“CARLISLE, Dec. 14.

. . . “I heard last night from my friends in London, and I shall certainly have the deed this week. I will send it to you directly; but not to lose so much time as you have been reckoning, I will prevent any little delay that might happen by post, by fixing already next Wednesday for your coming here, and on Thursday, the 21st—Oh, my dear Scott—on that day I shall be yours for ever.

C. C.

“*P.S.—*Arrange it so that we shall see none of your family the night of our arrival. I shall be so tired, and such a fright, I should not be seen to advantage.”



## 192 Sir Walter Scott's First Love

Scott carried his bride to a lodging in George Street, Edinburgh; a house which he had taken in South Castle Street not being quite prepared for her reception. The first fortnight, to which she had looked with such anxiety, was, I believe, more than sufficient to convince her husband's family that, however rashly he had formed the connection, she had the sterling qualities of a good wife. Notwithstanding the little leanings to the pomps and vanities of the world, which her letters have not concealed, she had made up her mind to find her happiness in better things; and so long as their circumstances continued narrow, no woman could have conformed herself to them with more of good feeling and good sense. Some habits, new in the quiet domestic circles of Edinburgh citizens, did not escape criticism; and in particular, I have heard herself, in her most prosperous days, laugh heartily at the remonstrances of her George Street landlady, when it was discovered that her *southron* lodger chose to sit usually, and not on high occasions merely, in her drawing-room—on which subject the mother-in-law was much disposed to take the thrifty, old-fashioned dame's side.—*Lockhart's Life of Scott.*







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